Communication Skills Lab 4: Interviewing Children

Communication Skills Lab 4: Interviewing Children

Display Slide 4.0.1

Time: 2-3 Full Training Days

Module Purpose: This lab will be focused on interviews of children, in particular developing knowledge and skills related to language competence. This lab will build on information that has been learned in Module 3, Child Development. As this lab will also follow a field shadowing of interviews of adults, the first unit will be a debrief of those field observations. This lab will focus on linguistic issues generally associated with child age groups, particularly focusing on the pre-school age group. The strategies for interviewing young children are generally transferable to children of all ages, especially in light of the possible developmental delays that many maltreated children experience. These strategies should also be considered when interviewing a person with limited proficiency in the English language. There are several new interviewing techniques introduced in this lab that are best interviewing practices to use with children and adults with limited English proficiency. At the end of this lab, participants should be able differentiate between interviewing skills appropriate for adults vs. children.

Credits:
Much of the material in this lab was adapted with permission from curricula developed by the Alabama Department of Human Resources, Alabama Child Welfare Training Curriculum (ACT, Session 8, Child Interviewing: Rapport Building and Developmental Assessment and Session 8, Child Interviewing: Tools and Techniques). The material related to "Language Assessment" comes with permission from the "Handbook on Questioning Children, A Linguistic Perspective, 3rd Edition", by Anne Graffam Walker, Ph.D., American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, 2013. Research cites from this ABA publication are included in the references at the end of this module.

Material that pertains to forensic interview techniques is from training for first responders ("How to Talk to Children") developed by Jennifer Miller, Forensic Interviewer with the Children' Justice Center for the 13th Judicial Circuit, Tampa, Florida. The "Ten Step Investigative Interview" was developed by Thomas D. Lyon, J.D., Ph.D., based on an adaptation of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Investigative Interview Protocol.

Demonstrated Skills:

Activities are intended to develop beginning skills for rapport building and interviewing of children.

1. Participants will describe comprehension and use of language associated with different child age groups.
2. Participants will describe rapport building approaches with children.
3. Participants will explain the techniques associated with the "10 step investigative interview" developed by Thomas D. Lyon, J.D., Ph.D.
4. Participants will discuss common errors made with child interviews.
5. Participants will practice use of skills with each other and a child in their personal network.
6. Participants will practice field observation of child interviewing skills.

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Review the agenda for day 1 and day 2 with the participants.

Day 1 Agenda

1. Debrief field observations.
2. Describe foundational concepts of interviewing children.
3. Identify how to conduct language assessments of children.
4. Identify and practice interviewing questions and solutions for children at different stages of language development.

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Day 2 Agenda

1. Describe foundational concepts of interviewing children for maltreatment disclosures and safety assessment.
2. Identify and practice interviewing questions to learn about maltreatment and safety.
3. Prepare for field observation and practice of child interviewing skills.

Materials:

- Trainer's Guide (TG)
- Participant's Guide (PG) (Participants should bring their own.)
- PowerPoint slide deck
- Markers
- Flip chart paper
- Blank index cards, no lines on either side

Activities:

Unit 4.2

- Lab Activity 1: The Ten Step Investigative Interview, Part 1 – 17
- Lab Activity 2: The Ten Step Investigative Interview, Part 2 – 28
- Lab Activity 3: Demonstrate use of Child Interview Instructions – 30

Unit 4.3

- Lab Activity 4: The Ten Step Investigative Interview, Part 3 – 36
- Lab Activity 5: Demonstrating Language Solutions – 56
- Lab Activity 6: What to ask a Four-Year-Old – 60
- Lab Activity 7: What to ask a Nine-Year-Old – 68
- Lab Activity 8: What to ask a Fifteen-Year-Old – 74

Unit 4.4

- Lab Activity 9: What to ask a Child to Learn about Adult Functioning, Parenting and Discipline – 82
- Lab Activity 10: Asking Child about Details – 102

Unit 4.5

- Lab Activity 11: Demonstrating Child Interviewing Skills - 113

Unit 4.1: Debrief Field Observation of Exploring and Focusing Skills

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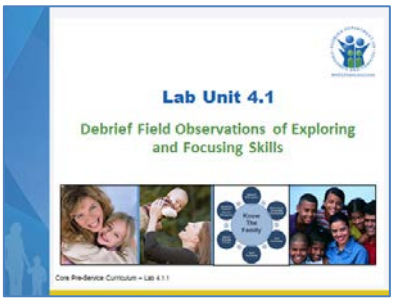

Time:

Unit Overview: The purpose of this unit is to give participants an opportunity to share their experiences with field shadowing as well as their observations of exploring and focusing skills. This will provide both a review of the exploring and focusing skills and an opportunity to further clarify any questions that participants have.

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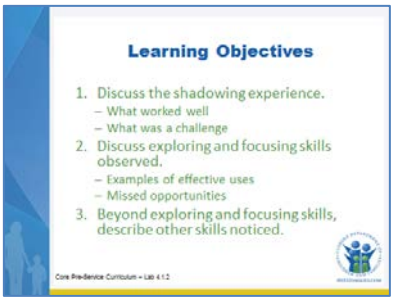

Review the Learning Objectives with the participants.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the shadowing experience.
   - What worked well.
   - What was a challenge.
   - Lessons learned.
2. Discuss exploring skills observed.
   - Examples of effective uses.

- Missed opportunities.

3. Beyond exploring skills, describe other skills noticed.

As we did in the last lab, let's take just a few minutes to first discuss your experiences with "shadowing." How did establishing a working agreement with the person you observed go this time?

Who is willing to share a success with establishing a working agreement?

It would be good to hear at least two different success stories. Trainer should allow participant to tell the story of their working agreement. Be sure to ask/clarify the following:

- *Were they able to share purpose of their observations?*
- *Did they get introduced to person being interviewed?*
- *Did they get some information prior to interview as to what the interview was for?*
- *How did they record their observations?*
- *What did they see as the benefit of the working agreement?*

Trainer should provide a precise summarization of the success story at the end to model summarization.

Emphasize the importance of clear communication with our colleagues as to what our agreements with each other are.

For those of you who feel that the working agreement was not attempted or effective, what was the issue?

It would be helpful for the trainer to also make the offer to talk to anyone privately who does not want to share concerns with whole class.

Be sure to ask "what" caused the working agreement to not be effective, not "who." It is important to tease out whether the working agreement needs strengthening next time and it is reasonable for the participant to do so; or whether there is a local issue that the trainer needs to address (e.g.,, worker did not want to be observed, asked participant to wait in car). Ask the participant what might happen differently next time to get a different outcome. Use reflection and reframing skills to the extent possible; use summarization at end.

Display Slide 4.1.3 ***(PG: 4)***

Let's discuss examples of effective interview openings. We are going to go right down the list. When you offer your example, provide a brief summary of what was happening at that point in the interview, the skill demonstrated, and the positive impact of the skill used.

Go from respectful greeting to "immediate concerns addressed." If an example is offered that doesn't match the topic, clarify what it is a good example of Provide positive reinforcement for specific details and examples observed.

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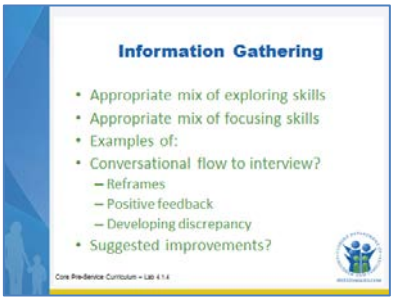

Trainer Note: Lead participants through discussion of information gathering, seeking specific examples of exploring skills, focusing skills, and what difference those skills appeared to make. Lead a discussion as to the "flow" of the interview observed (e.g.,, was there appropriate psychological attending in terms of building on statements made or topics raised by the person being interviewed or did the interviewer rush on to material they wanted to cover, etc.,?).

If anyone has any examples of an interview where person interviewed had a difficult time staying on topic and possibly "flooding" the interviewer with information, discuss whether there was or could have been use of summarization to reinforce what was being heard and steer the interview to

another topic. Encourage participants to discuss what they might have done differently. **Be sure to ask "how might that have helped or been useful?" rather than a "why" question!**

To wrap-up the debrief of your shadowing experience, what were some other skills/techniques that you observed?

Trainer Note: It is recommended that you identify the specific skills you hear being described, and record on newsprint. It may be that they are recognizing a skill already learned without attaching correct name, or could be a skill used in different phase of interview, such as planning or closing.

Look for some teachable moments, such as the following two topics:

There may be examples raised of **workers sharing information or advice** to the person being interviewed. If so, some points that should be discussed:

- Generally, we want to hold our advice, feedback, recommendations for the later parts of the interview, (Planning and/or Closing Phase). Sometimes, an opportune moment may come earlier during information gathering. During information gathering, we want most of the conversation to be listening to person interviewed.
- When advice was given, was it requested?
- Was it given as something that MIGHT work as opposed to WILL work?
- Was it brief, turning conversation back to person interviewed to complete their sharing of information?
- Did it appear to be given at right time in interview, or might have been better holding for later part of interview?

There may be examples of **personal self-disclosures**. Some points to discuss:

- Were they appropriate self-disclosures?
    - Relevant
    - Brief
    - Normalized a parent's feelings
    - Maintained focus of conversation on person interviewed, not the worker
    - Did not endorse an inappropriate behavior

Now we are going to learn about interviews with children. We are going to build on all of what you have learned thus far about interview phases and engagement skills. That said, we are going to learn about using these skills in ways that are most effective with children.

Unit 4.2: The Power of Simplicity

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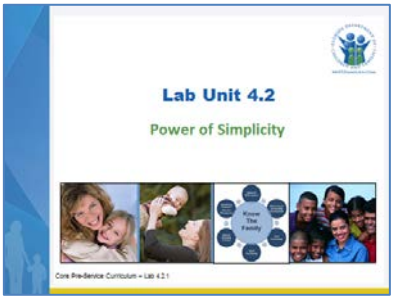

Time:

Purpose: This unit introduces some of the unique attributes of children that require the interviewer to keep their language simple and straightforward. Major types and purposes of child interviews are explained and the need for different interviews to be highly coordinated. Similarities between adult and child interview stages are discussed as well as the introduction of new skills on the engagement skills continuum specific to child interviews. Participants will learn about significant research findings as to what types of questions and interview "instructions" work dependably to help children tell accurate accounts of what has happened to them.

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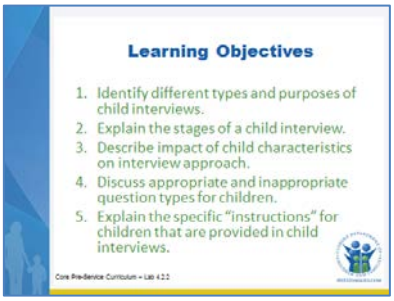

Review learning objectives.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify different types and purposes of child interviews.
2. Explain the stages of a child interview.
3. Describe impact of child characteristics on interview approach.

4. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate question types for children.
5. Explain the specific "instructions" for children that are provided in child interviews.

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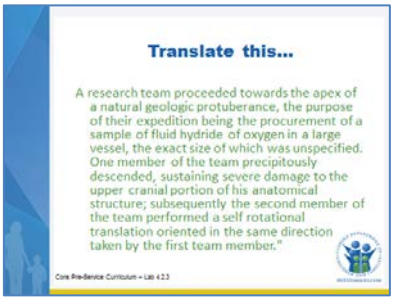

Give participants time to read and attempt to decode. Ask if anyone wants to offer a simpler version of this.

Then display next slide.

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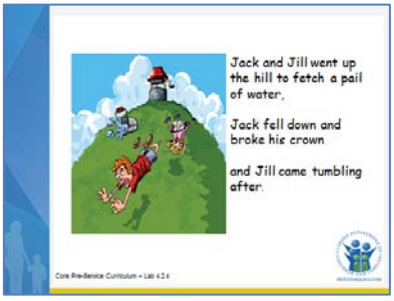

What point does this make?

- It is the obligation of the person speaking to use language that the listener understands.

When are not speaking in a way that is understandable for children, they are hearing and not understanding the first version of Jack and Jill.

It's not the child that is the problem it is the expectation and skill level of the interviewer that is the problem.

Display Slide 4.2.5 ***(PG: 5)***

Who knows a two year old? Would you ask this little girl if she can do puzzles, or would you ask her "show me?"

Trainer Note: Allow participants to explain how they know that pre-verbal children are able to comprehend a lot. They learn how to wave bye-bye, how to give hugs and kisses, how to say "night, night" etc., long before they are able to say the words. They learn to do respond to many simple commands and tasks that are helping them develop all kinds of skills. The key point to make is that we know that the child understands because they can SHOW, or DEMONSTRATE what the word means before saying it.

This is important for interviewers to remember no matter what the age and physical size of a child. If they can demonstrate or show you an understanding of a concept, they don't necessarily need to verbalize it. You can prove they knew you what you meant because you asked them to demonstrate it, to show you.

Display Slide 4.2.6

The two main types of interviews conducted by child welfare professionals are:

- **Investigative interviews** that are associated with a child

protection investigation to determine whether specific incidents of maltreatment have occurred and whether a child is safe (present and impending danger)

- **Child safety and well-being** interviews conducted by case managers and other child welfare system specialists working with children in the system who have been determined to be unsafe. Case managers assess the sufficiency of child safety plans through-out the life of the child's involvement in the child welfare system.

Both types of interviews seek to gain sufficient information to accurately assess the child's current care and supervision as well as their current child functioning.

Children in the child welfare system who have been found to be unsafe, whether they are at home with a safety plan or in out of home care, must be seen and interviewed in the setting where they live, at least once a month by their case manager.

Case managers will be responsible for continuously assessing whether children are experiencing safety and well-being with their parents or other caregivers. If a new incident of maltreatment is suspected, it will be reported to the statewide hotline and a new protective investigation will be conducted. In such cases, the CPI and the case manager will coordinate their work in terms of interviews and sharing of current information.

Display Slide 4.2.7 ***(PG: 5)***

A forensic interview is conducted by a specially-trained law enforcement officer or interviewer which uses specific techniques for gathering evidence for a criminal investigation and possible prosecution. As soon as the department learns in a child protection investigation that a crime may have been committed, the information must be immediately conveyed to law enforcement and the state attorney's office. Law enforcement will take the lead in a criminal investigation.

Child Protection Teams (CPT), in addition to forensic interviewing, have the expertise to conduct medical evaluations of children with medical conditions or physical injuries. Florida law defines the types of cases that must be referred to the CPT. When law enforcement and a CPT are involved, there are local protocols for coordinating child interviews and sharing information, and collaborating.

Most of the interviews that a CPI or case manager conducts will not be associated with a criminal case. That said, forensic interviewing techniques have been researched and developed to ensure that the methods used are a reliable way for learning from children what has happened.

Important information about child safety and well-being, even information obtained firsthand through child disclosure, should to the extent possible, be corroborated by other sources.

A therapeutic interview is a conducted by a mental health professional to determine the child's perceptions of events and how the events affected the child. It may be to evaluate a child or to provide age-appropriate interventions that are intended to help the child heal from the trauma that has been experienced. It is extremely useful and important for a therapist involved with any child to have information gathered by the CPI and the case manager.

Trainer Note: Before proceeding to discuss child interviewing, explain to participants that they will be learning about information collection protocols in their specialty tracks. Explain that while the child is a key "witness" to what they have been or are experiencing in their home, there are generally other persons who know what is happening as well. And, with any child maltreatment there may be physical evidence to corroborate what has happened (e.g.,, bruises consistent with physical abuse, child pornography in home indicative of sexual exploitation, etc.,).

Any critical decision made by child welfare professionals – identification of danger threats, assessment of caregiver protective capacities, the overall determination of child safety – is dependent upon "information sufficiency," the worker having enough information to create the "big picture" of the family.

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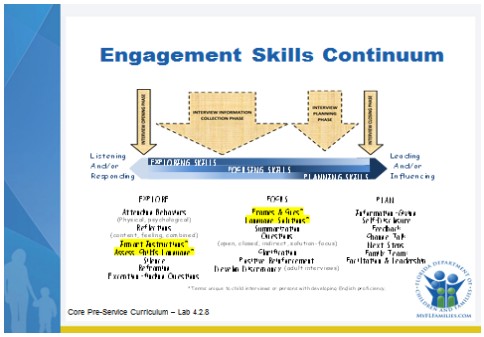

The engagement skills continuum for adults and children, and the way skills are used to navigate an interview through its four phases, are the same. The first phase of the interview will focus on establishing rapport and putting the child at ease. As with adult interviews, the interview begins explaining who you are and with sharing the purpose of the interview.

Obviously for children, this "explanation" has to be age-appropriate – for most children, "I'm here to talk with you about your family" is generally about as specific as you want to get prior to building more rapport with the child.

In the information collection phase of the interview you will impart the "**interview instructions"** for children. As children generally view all adults as the experts, they will tell you what they

think you want to hear unless you successfully convey that you don't know what they know. We will be going over specific techniques for accomplishing this.

The next part of information gathering will be your assessment of their language skills. As part of assessing their language skills, you will also begin to gather information directly from children about their child functioning in terms of what they like to do, and don't like to do.

The language assessment that you conduct will inform the adaptations you will need to make to your interview questions. On the engagement skills continuum, these adaptations are referred to as "language solutions." We will spend time discussing language challenges and language solutions for children in unit 4.3.

After the developmental assessment of language skills, the information collection moves to the heart of the interview, learning about the child's current care, supervision and well-being; and whether the child has been a victim of maltreatment, is currently safe or not safe.

Open-ended questions, summarization and clarification will be constantly used. There are also new skills you will be learning, referred to as **"frames and cues"** that are essential in order to provide children of different ages the structure they need to tell you about their situation.

An interview that is predominantly closed questions, with yes/no and one word answers, is likely an interview that has failed to gather essential information from the child.

The third phase of the interview is planning with the child what needs to happen next to ensure safety or to improve well-being. As age appropriate, it is important to help the child feel some sense of control by exploring their feedback and any options.

The closure of the interview summarizes what the plan is, and what happens next.

Display Slide 4.2.9 ***(PG: 7-8)***

Lab Activity 1: The Ten Step Investigative Interview, Part 1

Time: 30 minutes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7my1T4Ghf7A

Purpose: This is a one hour video, "Interviewing Children: Getting More with Less" which will be shown to participants in three parts. This first part will introduce participants to some of the important evidence behind forensic interviewing methods, presented by Thomas D. Lyon, one of the foremost child interviewing experts. Dr. Lyon's research interests include child witnesses, child maltreatment and domestic violence. He has published more than 60 papers in law reviews, psychology journals and books; has authored or co-authored more than 90 research presentations at psychology and law conferences; and has conducted more than 200 trainings with judges, attorneys, law professors, social workers, psychologists and reporters. His work has been supported by the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the United States Department of Justice, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, the California Endowment, and the Haynes Foundation.

Trainer instructions:

- *Explain that this "Ten Step" interviewing protocol was developed for forensic interviewing, but the techniques are based on research and evidence as to what methods are most reliable in terms of obtaining accurate information in an interview with a child.*
- *Participants are going to watch the first part of the video that pertains to research about the types of questions that work best with children.*
- *Ask participants to jot down the main question that will be discussed at*

the end of this video, ***"Why might information from children be inconsistent, incomplete or totally false?"***

- *After watching video, pose the question to participants:*

"Why might information from children be inconsistent, incomplete or totally false?"

- *Lead a discussion that drives the point that while children may have a bias in terms of yes/no, or selecting last choice when offered two choices, or being reluctant to say "I don't know"; that said, be sure to point out that it was the question that was the problem, not the child!*
- *We owe it to children as interviewers to know how to ask the right questions, so that they can provide us with accurate information.*
- *Display next slide which captures the "nutshell" version of advice on interviewer questioning skills.*

Activity STOP

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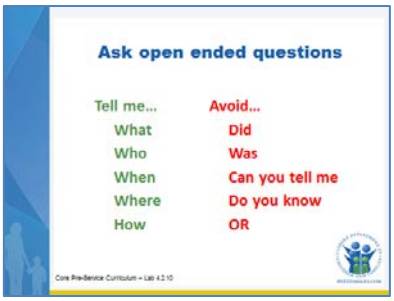

Here is a recreation of the slide in the video discussion by Dr. Lyons. The bottom line message to you as an interviewer, during the information collection phase **with a child of any age**, stick with open questions to learn about what, who, when, where and how. Avoid questions that begin with Did, Can you tell me, Did you know. Avoid forced choice questions (multiple choice questions) that have an "OR" (for example, did it happen inside or outside).

We will be practicing this today, and you will all have an opportunity to behave as children!

Display Slide 4.2.11 ***(PG: 12)***

So let's talk about the opening phase of an interview, building some rapport and putting a child at ease.

Generally, we won't interview a child under 36 months of age as they may not have sufficient cognitive and language skills to produce dependable information.

That said, studies have shown that children as young as 2 and 3 can recall and report past experience accurately. If you happen to know a two year old, you probably already know that they will be happy to show you their "boo-boos." However, two year olds with siblings are likely to tell you when you ask "Who did that?" to say, "My sister did it."

The bottom line with pre-verbal children is that their responses to physical abuse or neglect, including their coping strategies, and the effects of exposure to danger threats can be observed and assessed in ways that are not dependent on the child's ability to tell us directly what has happened.

We can use other abilities the child has, such as their ability to draw, to solicit significant information when necessary. **And, we will always conduct an observation of young children interacting with their parent, caregiver and at times, siblings to assess important, but non-verbal (for the infant/young toddler) dynamics between family members**. If a picture is worth a 1,000 words, watching family members interact together is worth 10 times that much!

To prepare for an interview with a child 36 months or older, prior to seeing the child whenever possible, we should try to gather some information from the non-offending parent, or other person who knows the child, to learn about any developmental limitations or idiosyncrasies.

If you knew that you were going to interview a child with a disability, what might you do before going to the interview?

Endorse and elicit:

- Getting more information about the child's specific condition and how it impacts cognition and communication from a family member, teacher, other expert
- When specific information about the disability is known, seek professional input about the condition and ways to communicate

A note of caution, there have been times when a parent described a child disability that prevented communication, resulting in the child welfare worker believing that the child was not capable of being interviewed. In such instances, the opinion of another person who knows the child should be sought to affirm that the child is unable to communicate in any way.

Regardless of disabilities, any child has the right to be heard, and we must make the effort to interview him/her.

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The setting for the interview should be quiet and private with minimal distractions. If the interview takes place at school, it should be in a setting that is as quiet and private as possible. To the extent practical, try to avoid having a child pulled out of class to minimize the stigma of being singled out (i.e., sent to the Principal or Guidance Counselor's office).

If the start of the child's next class is only 5 or 10 minutes away you should wait for the natural break to see the child. Another thing to avoid is sending a child back to class prematurely – before they've had sufficient time to regain their composure after sharing emotionally-charged information. When a child is visibly upset, it's your job to stay with the child or if you must leave, to find appropriate school personnel to stay with the child until the child is emotionally ready to go back into class.

A non-demanding atmosphere (not a stark office) is preferable. Research shows that the less demanding the atmosphere, the more factual and detailed the information children tend to disclose. If a child is living in a home where they are in a pervasive state of danger, there might not be any place in the home where the child feels comfortable. This is often the reason that the first investigative interview with a child takes place at school.

Case managers are required to visit children at their place of residence. Generally, children like to show visitors their bedroom, favorite toys or an outside area where they like to play. These settings provide a natural way to discuss child routines. These are all optional settings for interviews when the interview is home based.

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With adult interviews, we discussed the importance of our professional stance in terms of not coming across in an authoritarian, arrogant way. With children, we must work even harder to minimize the disparity in power.

Trainer Note: Trainer needs to demonstrate the difference between an interview with both persons at same eye level, vs. the interviewer "looking down" at the child. Trainer should ask a volunteer to come to front of room. Have volunteer sit in a chair (or on the floor) and then looking down, say, "I am really interested to learn about you and your family today." Then repeat the statement, this time by sitting in a chair opposite the person or on the floor with the person.

When I am at eye level with a child, why do you think that will result in greater information sharing from the child than if I am looking down at him/her?

Endorse and elicit:

- Adults are authority figures, intimidating
- When we are eye level child feels safer
- Looking down conveys that the adult is the expert

Try to decrease the power differential between you and the child. This helps the child to feel safer. Children have an innate desire to please adults which has a profound impact on the child interview. Those children who are surviving trauma are particularly expert at learning what they must do to survive by being compliant with the adults in their lives, including some who have learned to become as "invisible" as possible.

From the first session on, it is critical to avoid coercive messages, in both verbal and non-verbal forms. For example, avoid body positioning associated with power. Try to place yourself physically at the same level or below the level of the child as much as possible. This can be accomplished by sitting on the floor (depending on the age of the child), or using furniture to match your eye level with that of the child.

With child interviews, the use of "silence" or pauses is equally important. As children process information differently, and more slowly, pausing when you ask a child a question and giving them time to respond is important.

Verbal tones are some of the more subtle messages that can be associated with coercion. As with adult interviews, it is important to monitor not only what you say, but also how you say it. Your verbal tone should be as matter of fact as possible, especially when you are using direct questioning techniques.

Touching is another non-verbal message that can be very confusing and may even be coercive. It is best to avoid touching the child during first interviews. Children who have been abused sometimes have very poor body boundaries. To them, touch can be a subtle message of authority, and/or can be very confusing to a child. If child is upset, try to provide some form of physical comfort such as letting them hug a stuffed animal, or a pillow. Case managers, after developing an ongoing relationship with a child, will know whether or not it is appropriate to give the child hugs.

Avoid language that is too mature or too regressive. Language that is too mature may not be understood. For an older child, language that is too regressive may make the child feel patronized, and may decrease your chances of the child being frank and open.

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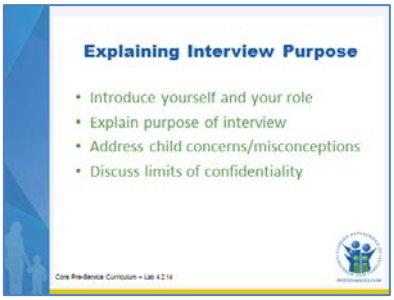


The interviewer should talk to the child about his or her role as someone who talks to kids and helps keep kids and families safe and healthy. Children are often scared or confused about why you want to talk to them. Often they have heard (perhaps from a parent) that DCF takes bad children away from their homes. Sometimes they have been threatened if they disclose a family secret. Needless to say, if a child is worried about that, it is important to get past that before any trust can be built.

Talking with children about why they think they are being interviewed is also a very good way to counteract some of the misconceptions the child may have. It is also very important if the child is brought to you by a parent or caregiver, or the parent is in the vicinity, that the child knows where the parent/caregiver will be when they go alone into the interview room with you.

For children who are extremely apprehensive it may be appropriate to have the parent stay in the same room until rapport is established between the child and the worker at which point the parent can leave "to make a phone call" in the next room (or provide the child with a similar disengagement explanation).

When and how to discuss the limits of confidentiality with children depends largely upon two considerations: (1) the child's age; and (2) the stated or non-verbal expression that the child is obviously worried about any negative consequences related to disclosing personal or family information. Generally, most of the child's concern is on how the adults in the child's life will react when

presented with information that only the child could have shared with the investigator or case manager. These concerns run the gamut from relatively minor repercussions such as losing cell phone privileges or being put on restriction to the fear of severe beatings or even the concern that the family may move away, leaving the child behind. Consequently, children who know they are disclosing significant information will want to know who else besides you is going to know what they've said.

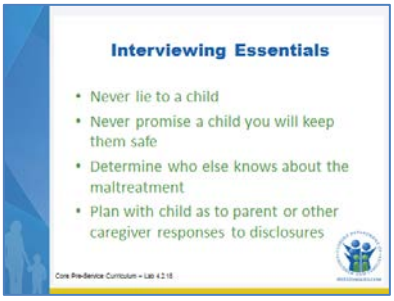
Consequently, one of the things you will always want to explore with a child is: (1) who else knows about the events being discussed; and (2) is the child concerned about being punished or further abused as a result of how you might have to share specific information with law enforcement, the judiciary, or in direct conversation with the parent?

Reassuring a child about the potential need (based upon what is disclosed or has been disclosed) for you to share their information with other parties without promising them their will not be consequences of a result of that sharing is one of the more difficult, but extremely important skills you will have to acquire.

Before you proceed with the interview, it is always good to ask the child one last time if they have any (other) questions for you.

Trainer Note: At this point, have participants read examples of indirect questions, then rewrite the statements provided. Debrief the rewrite of statements as a group, eliciting rewrites from the group first.

Display Slide 4.2.15 ***(PG: 10)***



Here are the essentials you need to remember:

1. Never lie to a child - but DO give them information in a manner and narrative consistent with their ability to understand what you're saying.

2. Never promise a child you will keep them safe (shelter petitions are denied by judges and you never really know for sure how a parent will react) – but DO talk about things you are going to do to make things safer for them.

4. Fully explore who else knows about the maltreatment incident(s) so you can intentionally re-direct the parent's focus off of what the child may have shared (i.e., "I've talked with many/several individuals who knew about the incident, etc.,").

5. Make definitive plans with the child regarding what the child should do if the parent is angry with them or starts pressuring the child to recant their story (e.g., "Tell a responsible adult immediately – an adult family or extended family member they trust, a teacher, guidance counselor, pastor or for older children, provide them with your direct cell phone number, etc.,). Discussion of using 911 services should probably be reserved for instances in which the disclosed maltreatment is severe or the family has a history of fleeing from child protection services.

We'll provide more tips for reducing a child's distress as a result of being interviewed at the end of this module.

Trainer Note: An anecdote to share with participants about children who have been coached.
We always talk about how children are too scared to talk about their abuse, but they can surprise you. In one interview situation, a child began telling of her sexual abuse on the stairway while the CPI was following her to her room. Sometimes children immediately launch into an abuse disclosure when they first see you. This situation should be approached with caution. It may be that the child has gotten pressure from home to tell you what happened, or to

tell you someone else's version of what happened. It is a good idea to listen carefully to what the child is saying, keeping in mind the possible motivations for telling a perfect stranger about a sexual abuse experience. Respond to the child supportively, but try to reduce the pressure by letting her know you will have plenty of time to talk about that, and that you will spend some time getting comfortable first. If the child seems stressed about leaving the topic, you can explore the reasons why. If she seems to have a genuine need to talk about it, allow the narrative description to be given with as little prompting from you as possible, and save more focused questioning until you have progressed through other phases of the interview.

Display Slide 4.2.16 ***(PG: 17)***

Be sensitive to the child's anxiety level. Stress does three things detrimental to the interview process: 1) diverts attention, 2) disorganizes thinking, and 3) reduces effort and motivation. Children are anxious for many reasons, not the least of which is being with a strange adult who wants to talk to them. An effective way to begin to reduce their stress level is to explain the instructions for the interview, making the child feel very important as well as having some fun. Let's watch the second part of the Dr. Lyon's video to learn about the interviewing instructions to give children.

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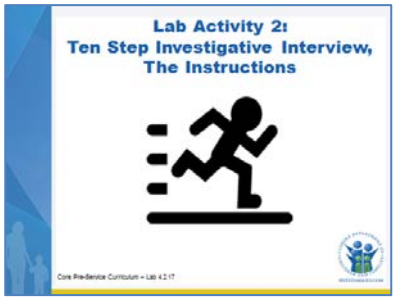


Lab Activity 2: The Ten Step Investigative Interview, Part 2

Time: 30 minutes
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7my1T4Ghf7A

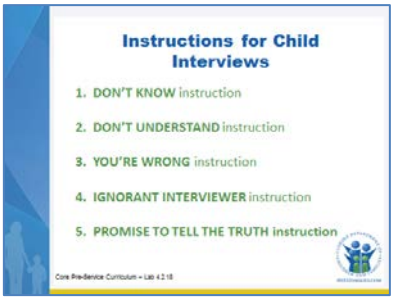
Purpose: This second part of the Dr. Lyon's video will introduce participants to the instructions (he uses the word "rules" that we will always give to children when conduct a child interview. Coupled with our correct use of questions, this will ensure that we are always using evidence based interviewing techniques. After seeing this video, discuss with participants why will not use the word "rules" when we give these instructions to children.

Trainer Instructions:

1. Instruct participants to focus on learning the instructions we will always give (or in case of subsequent interviews, ensure that children know).
2. **After watching video, use the next slides to assist with debriefing.**

Activity STOP

Display Slide 4.2.18 ***(PG: 7-8)***



The instructions to be provided to children are in the participant guide. These "instructions" are described as rules by many authors, and presented to children as "rules." A word of caution may be advisable regarding using the word "rules," however. The whole purpose of this section of the interview is to decrease the sense of coercion. Many of the children we evaluate come from homes in which "rules" may have a variety of negative connotations (Walker, 1998), and perhaps it is better to discuss these principles in terms of "the way we do things here," rather than in terms of "Rules."

Ten Step Investigative Interview

Thomas D. Lyon, J.D., Ph.D. tlyon@law.usc.edu © 2005 (version 2)
(Adaptation of the NICHD Investigative Interview Protocol)

1. DON'T KNOW instruction

If I ask you a question and you don't know the answer, then just say, "I don't know."

So if I ask you "What is my dog's name?" what do you say?
OK, because you don't know.
But what if I ask you "Do you have a dog?"
OK, because you do know.

2. DON'T UNDERSTAND instruction

If I ask you a question and you don't know what I mean or what I'm saying, you can say, "I don't know what you mean." I will ask it a different way.
So if I ask you "What is your gender?" what do you say?
That's because "gender" is a hard word. So I would say, "Are you a boy or a girl?"

For child who knows what gender means, ask "What is my orientation?"

3. YOU'RE WRONG instruction

Sometimes I make mistakes or say the wrong thing. When I do, you can tell me that I am wrong.
So if I say, "You are thirty years old," what do you say?
OK, so how old are you?

4. IGNORANT INTERVIEWER instruction

I don't know what's happened to you.
I won't be able to tell you the answers to my questions.

5. PROMISE TO TELL THE TRUTH instruction

It's really important that you tell me the truth.
Do you promise that you will tell me the truth?
Are you going to tell me any lies?

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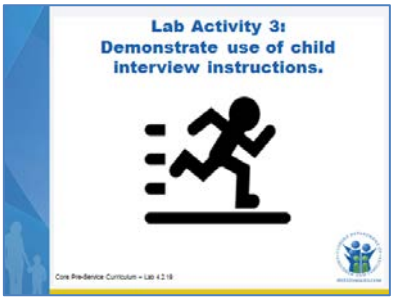

Lab Activity 3: Demonstrate use of Child Interview Instructions

Time:

Purpose: Give participants time to practice the interview instructions (steps 1-5, ***Lab PG: 7***).

Trainer Instructions:

- In pairs of two, have participants take turns practicing the instructions. One person should play the part of an average five year old child as best they are able!
- They should use their ten step interview guide (instructions 1-5) as a cheat sheet

- Debrief with participants as to how they plan to replicate the instructions in the field; what prompts do they plan to use, if any?

Activity STOP

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You will want to be attentive to a child's stress level through-out the whole interview, not just in the opening phase. There is a summary of "Tips To Consider When Talking With A Child In Distress" in your participant guide. Some of these we have talked about already; some will be discussed later in this module. Take a few minutes now to read through the list.

Trainer Note: Ask participants if there are any tips they wish to further discuss or have questions about. Be sure to emphasize that these tips are for all child welfare professionals, and pertain to all interviews with children that CPIs or case managers will conduct.

In the next unit we are going to discuss how to further assess the language skills that children have and use them to help the child tell the story of what they like and don't like, their family life, and whether they have been or are being maltreated.

TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN TALKING WITH A CHILD IN DISTRESS*

*Children's Hospital Intervention and Prevention Services, Alabama Department of Human Resources

- Establish a trusting relationship by first showing your interest in the child; show you are concerned.
- Regardless of how shocking a child's statements might be, maintain your openness and composure. Never appear shocked at what the child says.
- Don't stifle a child's trust by expressing disbelief or outrage.
- Be careful not to express a negative or discrediting attitude toward a child's parents.
- Let the child go at his/her pace. Listen and pick up on verbal and non-verbal clues the child gives. Do not talk too much yourself.
- You may wish to use drawing materials to provide diversion and lessen the tension.
- Let the younger child use a less threatening way to speak, through a doll, a puppet, a toy or a drawing for example.
- Don't convey anger or impatience if the child is not ready to discuss troubling issues.
- Never ask "why" questions.
- Try to arrange to talk with adolescents in a recreational setting. They may be more ready to talk while shooting a few baskets or walking the track.
- Talk with the child in a quiet place where you will be relatively alone, if you have control over the setting. More than one person may be intimidating to the child.
- If a child begins to feel discomfort and wants to break off the conversation, allow him/her to do so. Be alert for the child's readiness to discuss the situation at a later date.
- Listen for conflicting statements which may be the child attempting to cover an incident at the directions of a parent, or from loyalty or fear of retaliation from the person who abused them.
- Us the child's own works (especially in cases of sexual abuse) and check to make sure you both understand their meaning.
- Remember a child may feel some anxiety after telling you about his/her situation.
- You can help the child most by believing the child through the process.
- If you feel you should report abuse or neglect, explain this carefully to the child and reassure him/her that your care about both him/her and his/her parents. Explain that you need to tell someone who has helped other children and who may be able to help his/her family.
- Do not assure a child that he/she will not have to leave home. If the child asks, only assure that as a child welfare worker you will talk with the family members and try to help them.
- Above all, don't promise the child anything that may not happen (for example, "It will be all better.")

Unit 4.3: Language Assessment and Narrative Practice

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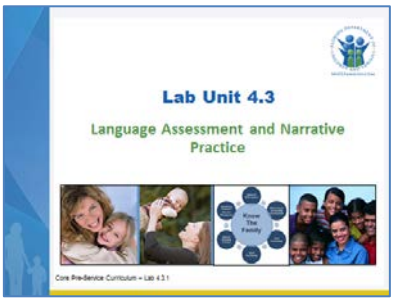

Time:

Unit Overview: Unit Overview: The purpose of the unit to learn specific skills that are appropriate for interviews with children who are highly "suggestible," do not have any or well-developed abstract thinking skills and are at different stages in terms of language skills. Participants will learn how to assess language skills and solutions for adapting their interview questions based on child suggestibility and a language assessment.

Display Slide 4.3.2

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the suggestibility of children.
2. Describe the instructions for child interviews from the "10 step" process.
3. Discuss narrative practice (helping children tell their story).
4. Explain the use of narrative practice to assess language skills.
5. Describe use of drawings with children.

Everything done during child interviewing depends upon an effective relationship as well as use of a language assessment to determine the appropriate interviewing skills with the child. The first session with the child sets the tone for the experience and gives you a chance to make the child comfortable and learn how to communicate with him or her. This unit will focus on how to learn certain critical factors pertaining to the language skills of the child and adapting your questions accordingly.

Trainer Note: This unit describes many common challenges with a child's language development, and discusses solutions. It discusses average abilities and challenges associated with three age groups, pre-school (3-5 years), latency age (6-12 years) and adolescents (13-18). **You will need to continually stress that there are vast differences of language development and maturity in children of all ages, as well as within each group.** Based on a language assessment, the child welfare professional will know how to adapt their interviewing techniques. The solutions that are discussed are also appropriate across all age groups, perhaps with modifications to be more relevant given the child's age. Knowing when the solutions are crucial to use will be based on the language assessment.

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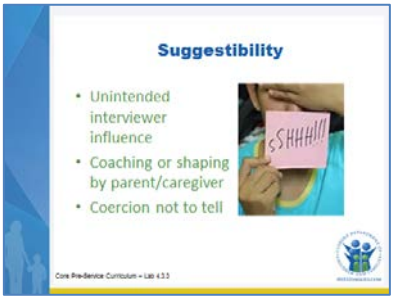

Let's first discuss the suggestibility of children at any age. This is a really important issue in child interviewing. Suggestibility takes three main forms.

Inadvertent interviewer influence. Unfortunately, this may be the most frequent challenge in child interviews. The main risk here is the use of leading or coercive questioning strategies. Interviewers can also run the risk of using a series of yes/no questions which

could influence the results of the interview. Some children are more suggestible than others, just like adults. Preschool kids tend to be more suggestible.

Coaching or shaping by a caregiver. It is not uncommon for parents to coach or shape their child's perception of what is happening, or the actual events. "Daddy really loves us, and if you make them think that he hurt you, they might make daddy go to jail." Or, "If you say that daddy hurt me, they might put you in foster care."

Coercion not to tell. Abuse takes place in an atmosphere of secrecy. Abusive caregivers exert a strong influence on the child to refrain from telling anyone. The interviewer faces the challenge of building the trust of the child to overcome the reluctance to tell, which is based on fear and coercion not to tell. Children have often been threatened with "I will kill your mother if you tell." Family pets have been killed in front of children to demonstrate the intent of parent to take harsh measures if the children tell anyone.

An interviewer cannot control what has happened in the child's environment in terms of coaching or coercion not to tell. However, an interviewer can be cautious in designing the interview to be non-suggestive and non-leading, and in decreasing unintended, but coercive interviewing factors.

One last caution for interviewers, while you want to be open to the possibility that a child has been coached or coerced, you never ask leading questions to confirm or rule out that possibility. Questions **not** to ask:

> "Your mom told you to say that didn't she?"
> "Your dad really didn't beat your mom did he?"
> "If you aren't telling me the truth, your dad might go to jail."

A more appropriate way to explore the possibility of coercion is to pose an indirect question such as, "I am wondering if you have

already talked with your mom (or any other adult) about what happened?" Any affirmative answer needs to be explored further with a simple, "And what did your mom (or other adult) say to you?"

An important engagement skill to decrease unintentional interviewer influence is to establish instructions for the interview. As important will be our ability to use appropriate questions and language solutions to assist a child in telling us what has happened.

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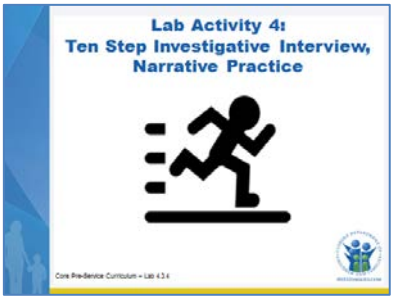

Lab Activity 4: The Ten Step Investigative Interview, Part 3

Time: 30 minutes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7my1T4Ghf7A

Purpose: This third part of the Dr. Lyon's video will introduce participants to the concept of "narrative practice" with children (step 6 of the "Ten Steps"). This technique, using a recent event that happened in a child's life that is not a sensitive subject, for example a child's birthday, can be used to assess a child's cognitive and linguistic skills, including their ability to sequence and describe events. This will provide a foundation for learning more about child interviewing challenges and solutions. Note that to keep this "simple," we are using the term "language assessment" to include both cognitive and linguistic skills.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Instruct participants that this time they will learn about narrative practice, which is the technique they will use to conduct a language assessment.*

- *After watching video, use the next slides to assist with debriefing and discussing content.*

Activity STOP

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You will need to determine with pre-school children whether their language skills are developed enough to understand the interview instructions. If they are not, you will still proceed to interview the child using all of the solutions you will be learning to keep the conversation as simple as possible. You can determine to what extent the very young child comprehends language by asking the "point to" head, hands, feet, eyes, etc., At the least, you will be gathering useful information for the child functioning information domain.

After a child has been given the instructions for the interview, you will then move to a general discussion about neutral topics of interest to the child to conduct the language assessment. You will ask them about what they like to do. If they are unable to think of things, you will need to do some prompting, being careful not to ask a leading or yes/no question.

"Do you like school?"
Tell me a better way to ask this:

- Tell me about school

"I bet recess is your favorite subject, isn't it?"

Tell me a better way to ask this:

- What do you like to do in school?
- Tell me more about that.
- What do you not like to do in school?
- Tell me more about that.

"*I am sure you have a best friend! Tell me about him/her.*"

- Tell me about your friends
- What do you like to do with your friends?

These are usually easy, neutral topics for engaging in conversation, and you can begin to learn about the child's language and personal style. A child who is very introverted or even withdrawn will need to be brought out with verbal following, reflection and encouragement to talk. Correspondingly, using tactile devices like Play-Doh or stuffed toys can sometimes soothe a child who is hyperactive or agitated. Fair warning: keep the toys to a minimum however, as having too many toys available for a hyperactive child to be distracted by will be counterproductive to the interview process!

As the child is discussing these general topics, the interviewer assesses such areas such as sentence and word length, abstract concept understanding, unique words used by the child, attention span, memory and ability to respond to a question. Assessing language will be discussed in more depth in the next unit.

In addition to learning the child's language skills, what are the other benefits of the "What do you like/not like" in terms of your child interview?

Endorse and elicit each of the following points at a minimum:

- Shows the child how interested you are in them
- Gives them a chance to practice the interviewing approach (topic given by interviewer, followed up by "tell me more"
- Gives the interviewer many opportunities for praise and positive reinforcement
- Provides a success for the child in that they do know the answers to your questions
- Gives them some encouragement for the more difficult topics to come.

One technique in child interviews that you will use frequently is providing a "frame" as to the topic you wish to discuss with them.

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A "frame" simply lets the child know what the topic is. What things a child likes to do, or not, provides the topic (e.g.,, "We're going to talk about the things you like you like to do when you get home from school", etc.,). The interviewer should also hold the frame in mind, and finish exploring the topic rather than jump too early to something else. There should at least be a follow-up "Tell me more" after the child's initial response.

If a child jumps to another topic, the interviewer should say "Let's talk about that in a minute. Right now let's just talk about…." This

keeps the interviewer and the child on the same page, clearly talking about the same things. This will improve the reliability of the child's responses.

A frame can also be used if we are confused or want to go back to check on an earlier child response. "I know you told me about X, but I am mixed up. Would you tell me more about X?" This is a way of returning to a subject, providing a frame for it, and might help allay a child's fear that the earlier answer was wrong. (Walker, ABA Guide)

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After the discussion about what the child likes and doesn't like, you ask about a recent special event. If there has been a major holiday recently, and you know the child's family celebrates it that can also be an event to discuss.

The ability to narrate about the past is considered one of most important advances children make in acquiring language (Brown, 1973). It is a skill that must be learned, and something that most parents do instinctively-- helping children build their ability to recall events and tell the story of them.

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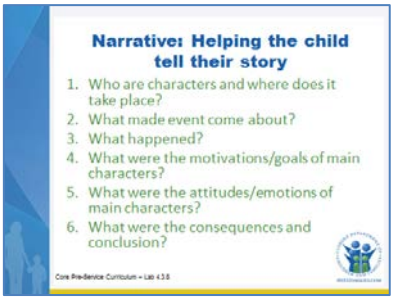

There are six components of narrative, or "telling a story."

1. Who are characters and where does it take place?
2. What made event come about?
3. What happened?
4. What were the motivations/goals of main characters?
5. What were the attitudes/emotions of main characters?
6. What were the consequences and conclusion?

As important are the descriptive details surrounding the story—sights, sounds, feelings, beliefs). And last, the story is ordered chronologically. (Walker, 2013)

Children first begin to develop the ability to narrate an event at about age 2 (Fivush, Gray and Fromhoff, 1987) and it matures over time, parallel with cognitive, linguistic and conversational skills. A related essential skill is understanding the concept of time. There are a number of other necessary language skills for telling a story that we will be discussing next. All of the skills needed are not acquired until sometime in the teen years (Labov, 1972; Whitehurst, 1976).

The bottom line is that effective interviewing skills and language solutions are key to providing the structure and correct questions to help children tell their story.

So, when you ask a child to tell you about their last birthday party, what are your achieving?

Endorse and elicit:

- Help child provide descriptive details by asking open ended questions (Tell me all about your party rather than yes/no or closed questions)
- Helping child construct the order of events (What happened first, what happened next? After X happened, then what happened?)
- Assessing their use of language, how they refer to family members
- How well they put sentences together
- Attention span, how much "framing" they will need to stay on topic
- Practice with you around recalling and describing an event

So now let's turn our attention to the language assessment that you will be doing as children tell you what they like, don't like and the details of that last birthday party.

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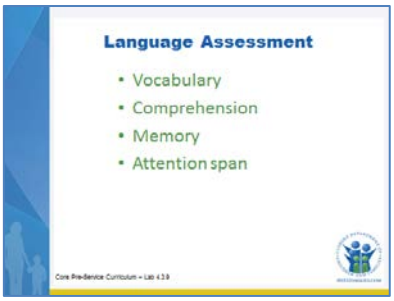

Assessing a child's language skills is more of an art than a science. Your understanding of the child's developmental level broadens throughout the interview, but there are some basics about language use that you want to learn up front so as not ask questions that the child is not able to answer, or worse, provides an inaccurate answer that is not useful for determining child safety and unintentionally demeans the's child credibility.

Trainer Note: Much of the material in this section comes from the "*Handbook of Questioning Children, A Linguistic Perspective" Third Edition,* by Anne Graffam Walker, Ph.D., ABA Center on Children and the Law, 2013. In addition, many of the solutions offered come from Alabama's child welfare curriculum, ACT, Session 8.

The assessment of language skills is organized around three general age categories, as chronological age does not always dictate what works best with a given child. There are inherent differences in the language development of boys and girls, birth order in a family, the family's use of language in the home, and whether children attend a child care center that uses a pre-school curricula.

We also know that children who have experienced the trauma of physical abuse or neglect are much more likely to experience developmental delays that will impact cognition and language skills. A child of any age may fall into one of the three categories below. It is up to you to determine what skills the child has or does not have, and to adapt your approach accordingly.

Three general stages of language assessment are presented—preschoolers, latency age, and adolescents.

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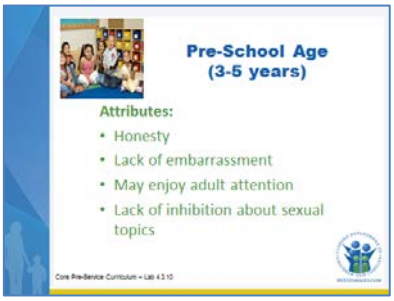

The average pre-school child has a number of attributes that contribute in a positive way to the interviewer's ability to build rapport and gather dependable information. These qualities include:

Honesty
Lack of embarrassment
May enjoy adult attention
Lack of inhibition about sexual topics

Depending on their family dynamics and what they have experienced, you may also experience extremes in terms of a young child's comfort level with a stranger. Some children will exhibit intense fear and introversion. Other children will be ready to climb on your lap or give you hugs. Either extreme may be symptomatic of abuse or neglect, or more simply represent aspects of the child's innate disposition.

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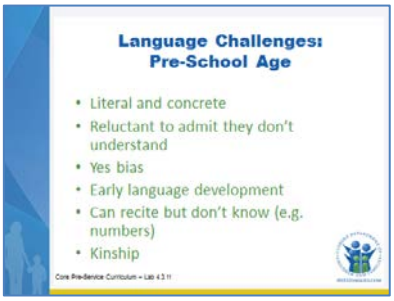

Trainer Note: A summary of some language challenges and language solutions is in ***Lab PG: 18-19***.

Literal and concrete. The first challenge with children whose language skills are not yet developed is the literal interpretation of words. If they refer to where they live as an apartment, and you ask about what happened in their house, they may not understand your question at all. They don't know that a "house" could also mean an "apartment." The same is true for other terms that categorize items, such as clothing, types of touch.

The language solution is to always clarify to be sure you both have the same understanding. To be sure that you are both defining a word the same way, you might ask, "Tell me more about X."

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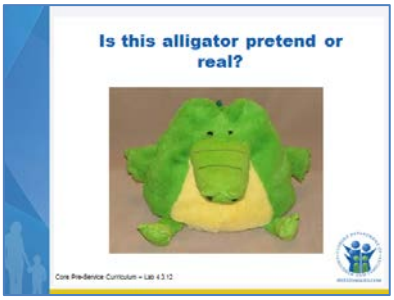

It is not uncommon for a three-year-old to mingle truth and fantasy. Very young children, like adults, internally generate thoughts that are different from their actual experiences. Unlike adults, however, they are unable to decide which thoughts are about real events, and which are thoughts they spontaneously generated.

To assess this ability, the interviewer asks questions about known experiences the child has had and other experiences which are clearly "pretend," and asks if the various experiences are real or pretend (for example: There was a big snapping alligator under your chair in the waiting room, is that real or pretend? Your mommy came with you today, is that real or pretend?). If the child cannot distinguish real and pretend, or if they are very suggestible, endorsing everything, the interviewer should be aware of a high risk of fantasy elements or suggestibility during maltreatment-focused questioning. If the suggestibility and fantasy risks are too extreme, the interviewer should make a careful decision as to whether or not to proceed with maltreatment focused questions.

If the child produces fantasy-like elements during abuse disclosure, the interviewer can remove the focus from the alleged abuse, and return with the child to a discussion of real and pretend. Then, after refreshing the child's awareness that only things that are real should be discussed, the interviewer can return to the target question (for example: You said your daddy made you lick his pee-pee, is that real or pretend?)

Child reluctance to say "I don't understand." We have already discussed the problem of children of any stage being reluctant to say that they don't understand. This must be addressed with your presentation and practice of interview instructions. In addition, throughout the interview, be sure to praise and reinforce the child when and if they indicate that they don't understand your question.

That said, remember that pre-school and some latency age children will not know what "understand" means. So, we are never going to directly ask a pre-school child if they "understand." It is not a reasonable question for a child who likely does not yet have any capacity for abstract thinking. Instead, we are going to say, "Tell me if you don't know what I mean, or if you don't know what I am saying."

An important language solution for all child interviews is to keep all sentences simple: one subject, one verb, one object. Children can't deal with multiple concepts in one sentence,. To them, it's the complicated version of Jack and Jill. As with adults, never put two questions together. "Did you wake up by yourself and fix your own breakfast?" Instead, "How did you wake up?" Who fixed breakfast?"

Early language development. Children know what happened, but they don't have the complete set of memory and language skills to explain and sequence events in the way that adults do.

They may also be practicing the use of words that they don't yet truly understand.

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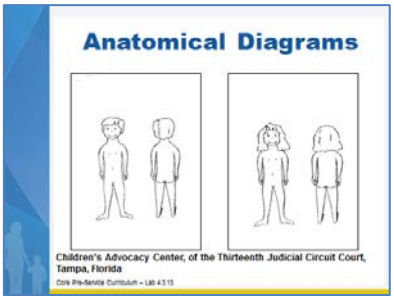

Anatomy identification "What do you call this?"
What are the words that the child uses for male and female body parts and does the child distinguish between genders? The best solution to accomplish an understanding of child's words for anatomy is for the interviewer to simply draw something that both he and the child can agree is a female or male, and then assign the anatomical parts their names.

Standard procedure in doing a body parts inventory is to question the child about their names for all body parts, from head to toe, including genitalia, using a drawing on which the child can demonstrate their knowledge. The purpose is to learn the child's names for body parts so that the CPI can use their words later if they begin to disclose abuse.

Since a percentage of children referred for child maltreatment interviews have not experienced sexual abuse, and may have never been exposed to genitalia of others, it is not necessary to make drawing anatomically correct. Another important advantage is that these drawings, being less explicit in anatomical detail, have less potential for being suggestive or leading. The use of anatomically correct drawings or dolls should be left to the trained, forensic interviewer.

The drawing, with names the child has given, also serves as a record of what was said. The case manager should use the child's language to explore whether the child is safe from touches on an on-going basis.

A CPI or case manager should never have children expose their genitals to identify what happened to them. The CPI or case manager should provide a venue to discuss what happened without the child having to point to their own body parts.

Another technique that can be used with an older child, called free-style drawing, is to ask the child to draw a picture of him or herself, and label the parts of the body, then to ask the child to draw a picture of a person of the opposite sex and label the parts. This is only appropriate if the child has the fine motor coordination and cognitive development to create a reasonably representative rendering.

Alternatively, the interviewer could draw the body and ask the child to supply the names for the parts. In the free-style drawing technique, the interviewer can write the words for the body parts and any other relevant information on the page with the drawing. Writing this information usually helps the child recognize that his or her words are important to the interviewer, and it creates a clear record.

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There are many different words that children have learned to use for body parts. An important language solution is to use the child's words in your interview to ensure that you and the child have the same understanding about what happened.

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Child's feelings. As to how a child felt when something happened, they may know but not be able to express it. This is when the simple pictures of sad face, angry face, scared face, etc., can be used for a child to show you how he/she felt. There is a chart of faces in your participant guide that you can use to help children point to the way something made them feel.

Yes bias. As you heard in the Dr. Lyon's discussion, children have a tendency to answer yes to yes/no questions. This is in part due to early lessons they have learned that "yes" equals cooperation, and "no" means defiance. They are easily led to the answer that is embedded in a question, such as, "I bet you love going to your grandma's house, don't you." A young child given a two choice answer, is this a dog or cat, may simply say "yes." The best solution if you need to ask a yes/no question is to add, so tell me about (insert topic) (e.g., your cat, etc.,).

Can recite but doesn't understand. One child who could not count to ten told the interviewer her daddy touched her pee-pee a thousand times. In this statement, obviously the accuracy of "a thousand times" is questionable, but it is also clear that the child was trying to tell the interviewer it happened a lot of times. We assess a child's understanding of number concepts and colors because we need to attempt to establish how many incidents of abuse occurred. Knowing the child's ability to correctly identify colors of hair, clothing and décor (e.g., to help identify the setting where the maltreatment occurred, etc.,) enhances our ability to establish the credibility of the child and information provided.

Children can be excellent at reciting things, such as prayers, days of the week, number of states, etc., long before they have any true understanding as to the meanings.

How could you solve the problem of whether a child really understands numbers?

Endorse: Have them count objects in your presence.

How could you solve the problem of whether a child really understands colors?

Endorse: Ask them to identify colors.

Kinship. Based on family traditions and culture, children have different naming conventions for the relatives and close friends of the family. Neighbors may be called uncle, mother's boyfriends may be called daddy. Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of the child's family milieu and the people with whom they generally interact, as well as who takes care of them.

Some children under 9 or 10 may not have any mastery of this relational concept. A clear understanding of who people are and what the child calls them assists in a more accurate understanding of family functioning, and identification of an alleged perpetrator in investigations.

Children in foster care are often quick to call their foster parents "Mom and Dad." Should allegations of maltreatment be made, it is very important to clarify which "mom" or "dad" the child is referring to.

There are several solution options for assessing a child's knowledge of kinship relationships.

Drawing a picture of where child lives. The interviewer can draw a

house if the child is not able, and ask the child to name people who also live there; be sure to ask about people who come to visit as well. The interviewer asks open ended questions about who the people are, what their relationship is with the child, what they do in the house and how the child feels about them. This can also be a useful way to discuss a child's temporary living arrangement when they have been placed with a relative or a foster parent.

In the *family drawing technique*, the child is asked to draw a picture of his or her family doing something, and then describe the activity and name the people. As the child draws the picture, and the interviewer asks open ended questions about the drawing, inquiring about who the people are, what their relationship is with the child, what they are doing and how the child feels about them.

One technique that is generally better for school age children is drawing the family tree. It can be a simple line drawing of a tree. The child is asked to name each person in their family and their relationship to each person, and write the names on the tree. If the child cannot write, the interviewer writes the names.

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Pronouns, sometimes referred to as "indexicals" are words used to point to (as with "index") or identify a person, place or thing. Their use requires a firm grasp of speech roles, how people fit into them, and what the listener knows. Mastery is a slow process. Keeping track of pronouns in one sentence or many sentences can be difficult for children, creating misunderstandings and negatively affect a child's credibility.

The simple and dependable solution for the interviewer is to not use pronouns, use the person's name. For example, "When mom fixed dinner, mom (instead of she) dropped the pot (instead of it)."

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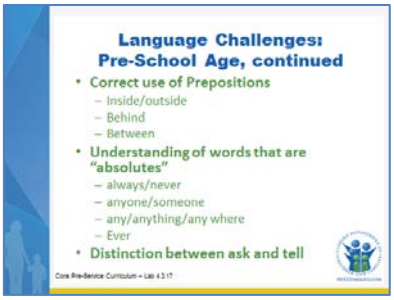

There are many other words that may be used by a child, but not fully understood. These words may even present challenges for an adult if you think about the true meaning and the implications.

Prepositions are those little words that provide such useful details. There is a big difference if the cat was on the dryer or in it. Prepositions used in conjunction with time, such as before school or after school, can be even more confusing to a child who hasn't mastered time. As a general rule, don't use prepositions when talking about when something happened with a pre-school child.

In child sexual abuse cases, pre-school children may not be able to articulate the difference between penetration (in) or rubbing (outside) not necessarily because they do not understand the concepts but because they did not visually observe the act (i.e., the perpetrator was simply lying on top of them) and the physical sensations experienced are consequently generalized to "down there" (referring to their vaginal area). Young children may be able to tell the difference between penetration and rubbing, just don't assume so because they know the difference between the terms "in" and "outside."

Prepositions are usually mastered by age of 6 when there has been

healthy language development. When you are assessing a child sexual abuse allegation with a young child, before you get to details about what has happened, there are simple ways to assess the child's understanding of prepositions.

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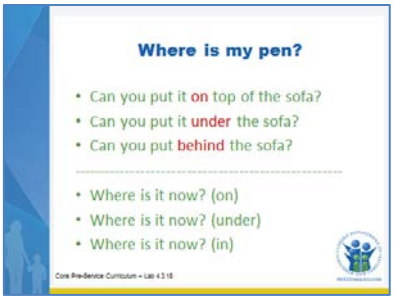

Have the child **demonstrate** an understanding of prepositions. Ask the child to position one object in relation to another (e.g., "Put the crayon on the coloring book….under the coloring book," etc.,) and to position objects in relation to the child (e.g., "Now, put the crayon in front of you…behind you…." etc.,). These demonstrations can be done with any object that is handy. If you have some blocks and any container, you can also have the child demonstrate knowledge of the word "in."

Remember, the key is to ask the child to **demonstrate** their knowledge, not to tell you.

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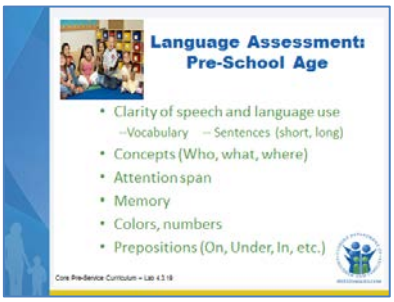

There are other words that we use often, and these words pop up often in questions with young children. These words are referred to as "absolutes."

"Does your mom drink beer every night?" or "Has it **ever** happened?"

"Has **someone** hurt you?" or "Has **anything** happened to you?"
"Did it happen **anywhere?"**

"You have **never** been spanked?"

Why might these questions be problematic?

Endorse and elicit:

- Requires really good memory to recall such always, ever, or never
- Does child know meaning of "someone" or anything or anywhere?
- As with pronouns, a preferred solution is to be specific, yet not ask a yes/no question.

So tell me a better way to ask about mom drinking beer at night?

(*Encourage them to look at their "Ten Steps")*

- Did your mom drink beer at night one time or more than one time?
- Tell me everything that happened the time you remember the most?
- Tell me about the last time?
- Was there another time?

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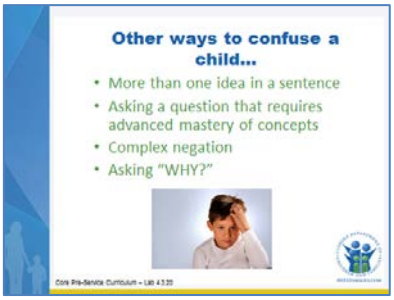

To wrap this up, there are few other things to know about interviewing young children that contribute to their confusion and will compromise their ability to provide dependable, consistent information.

It is best to always keep your sentences to one idea. When you stray from that, it's going to risk confusing a child. Actually, it can confuse older kids too. Their confusion might be due to:

- Words in the sentence that are concepts not yet mastered, such as anything to do with time.
- It could simply be the difficulty of processing more than one idea at a time.
- It could be that they do not have short term memory.
- They need help with sequencing, and you have referred to events in a way that is **literally** out of order.
- You have stated something in a way that is a negative, such as "Did you not see that happen?" or "You were not happy?" or "It was not under the table?"

School teachers know that questions stated in a negative way on a school test are far less likely to be answered correctly than if stated in a positive way. Research has shown that kindergarten through college age students, on average, provide correct answers to questions with a single or double negative only 50% of the time (Perry et al., study, 1993).

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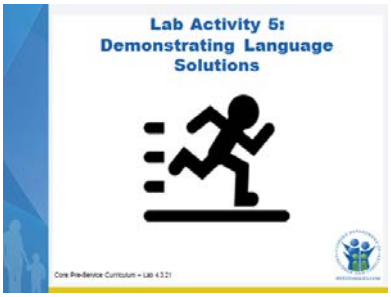

Lab Activity 5: Demonstrating Language Solutions

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise to give participants an opportunity to apply all of the information just learned to concrete written examples. They should be encouraged to use their participant guides to develop their answers.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Tell participants that they each will first complete this exercise alone. They are encouraged to use their participant guides and notes.*
- *Go over the instructions for the written part of the exercise to ensure that they understand what to do.*
- *After they have developed a written solution for each item, they will process the answers as a large group.*

WRITTEN EXAMPLES OF LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

Provide a written solution for the following problematic questions. The solution may also require more than one question.

Underline the problematic part of the sentence. Write a more appropriate question ("Solution") and a good follow-up question to obtain additional information.

1. "**He** yelled at you."
   Solution: Your dad (person's name) yelled at you.
   Follow-up: After your dad (person's name) yelled at you, then what happened?

2. "What happened **before** and **after** you fell down?"
   Solution: What were you doing when you fell down?
   Follow-up: What happened next? Who else saw you fall?

3. "You did **not** get spanked for telling a lie."
   Solution: What happens when you get in trouble?
   Follow-up: Tell me about the last time you got in trouble.

4. "You went to the emergency room and do you remember **why**?"
   Solution: You have a cast on your leg (site of specific injury) Tell me about your boo-boo (or how child refers to his/her injury).
   Follow-up: Who was the first person to know about your boo-boo? How did they find out about you boo-boo?

5. "**Before** you ate dinner **she** told you to wash your hands?"
   Solution: Your mom (identify person) told you to wash your hands and then eat dinner.
   Follow-up: What did your mom do when you were done eating?

6. "Are you saying that you fell off your bike **or did your dad tell you to say that**?"
   Solution: I am wondering if you are scared to tell me what happened?
   Follow-up: What do you think will happen because you got hurt?

7. "Did you **ever** tell **somebody** that your babysitter did **those things** and **she** scared you?"
   Solution: Who did you tell that Sara (babysitter's name)-burned you with a cigarette (describe what babysitter did).
   Follow-up: Did you tell your dad how scared you are of your babysitter? Did you tell your mom how scared you are of your babysitter?

8. "The last time your dad was smoking **that stuff**, was it **yesterday or last week**?"
   Solution: Your dad calls the bad smelling stuff he smokes "gonjay" (child's word for drug - ganja).Tell me when was the last time your dad smoked ganja?
   Follow-up: Were there other times when you have seen your dad smoke ganja?

9. "Do you know **who** Ms. Jones is?"
   Solution: Tell me about Ms. Jones.
   Follow-up: Tell me more**.**

10. **Didn't** you think **he** would send you to your room for **that**?
    Solution: Mr. Phillips (name of person) saw you pinch your sister (specific child behavior). What did Mr. Phillips do the last time that happened?
    Follow-up: Have there been other times?

- *The instructor will debrief after the groups are finished. The debrief*

should explore:

- *For some of the items, were there a few different solutions that would work well? If so, discuss examples.*
- *Was your group unable to agree on some of the items?*

Activity STOP

Some Common Language Challenges and Language Solutions for Child Interviews (Participant Guide pages 18-19)

Note: The use of appropriate interviewing questions and other skills to support a child interview are essential to gathering dependable information from a child. The following is a summary of some of the language challenges and language solutions that should be used in conjunction with other interviewing skills.

Language Challenge: Ability to narrate what happened with adequate sequencing and details is an advanced language skill, may not be present until later latency or adolescence age.
Language Solution: Use frames, cues and information from interviewer's language assessment of child to adapt questions appropriately to support child's recounting of what happened.

Challenge: Pre-school children are very literal
Language Solution: Be sure to learn the name child uses for any word that might be misunderstood (e.g., Child thinks of residence as "apartment" and asking about what happened in "house" is not understood by child to mean "apartment."

Language Challenge: Pre-school and latency age children have unique words for anatomy; may not know gender differences; may not know differences between 'ok' touch and 'not ok' touch
Language Solutions: Draw simple male and female pictures, have child identify name for each part, writing their name for parts on the drawing. Have child identify what it is ok to touch, not ok to touch. (Do not use term good/bad in reference to touch.)

Language Challenge: Pre-school children do not understand abstract concepts; latency age children will understand at some point in their language development (e.g., pretend/real; truth/lie; numbers; time/days/months/years)
Language Solutions: Ask child to demonstrate, not explain. Examples:

- Pretend/Real-- Point to stuffed animal or cartoon character on child's

shirt and ask "Is that real?"

- Truth/lie-- Point to yourself and say, "I am a turtle. Is that true?"
- With pre-school children do not ask when or how many times something has happened. Stick with use of "first time" and "last time." For example**,**
  - *Tell me everything that happened the time you remember the most…*
  - *Tell me everything that happened the first time…*
  - *Tell me everything that happened the last time…*
  - *Was there another time?*
- Establish the child's knowledge of night and day, earlier and later. You can ask questions like "When do you eat breakfast?" Then ask "Is that daytime or nighttime or what?"
- Learn the child's knowledge of time frames of familiar things, ("How long is the 'Barney' show.")
- You can check a latency age child's ability to tell time by having them read a watch or clock, both conventional and digital.

Challenge: Pre-school and some latency age children may not know kinship relationships (may refer to several different persons as "auntie" "dad" "papa" etc.,)

Language Solution: Determine child's specific name for people in the home and who visit.

- Create simple drawing of home, people who live there and write names. Ask child to draw or write names if they are able.
- Draw a family tree (school-age children).

Language Challenge: Pre-school and some latency age children do not know correct use of pronouns Keeping track of pronouns in one sentence can be difficult for children, create misunderstandings and affect a child's credibility (e.g., he/she; we/they**;** this/that/it**;** here/there; anything; anyone).

Language Solution: Always use child's name or word for specific person, place, and/or object names instead of pronoun

- Always conduct a clarification check to ensure that child and interviewer are talking about same person, place or thing

Language Challenge: Pre-school and some latency age children and some adolescents cannot process more than one idea in a sentence.

Language Solution: Use short questions-- one person, one verb one object. Use specific names, not pronouns. Use child's words and terms.

Language Challenge: Across all age groups, difficulty in understanding and correctly answering questions with negatives (e.g., Didn't he? Did you not say? Wasn't your mother at home?). Negative questions tend to elicit a 'no' response.

Language Solution: Word questions in a neutral way, e.g., "You said that 'dad'

did (child words). Who in your family saw (child words for what dad did)?

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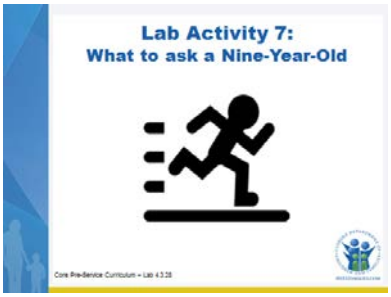

Lab Activity 6: What to ask a Four-Year-Old

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to have participants integrate the information they learned in Module 3 about child development with information just learned about appropriate questions. In processing this as a group, they will identify specific questions they would ask a four year old to learn information about child functioning. Point out to participants that if they were developing the child functioning domain for an FFA, they would also observe the child with parents and interview others who know the child. That said, there is a lot that they can learn directly from the child with thoughtfully-planned questions.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Instruct participants that in small groups of 4-6 participants, they will develop specific, correctly worded* ***OPEN*** *questions that they would ask a four year old to learn information from a child about child functioning. They are to use the information chart in their participant guides from Module 2, "Ages and Associated Characteristics" to guide the development of questions.*
- *The information they are to learn about from the child includes observations (for example, show me how you can write your name).*
- *Each group should select a recorder and put their answers on newsprint. They are to develop 3-5 questions for each of the following categories:*

1. What are the child's physical skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

2. What are the child's socio-emotional skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

3. What are the child's cognitive skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

4. What is the child's relationship with his/her parent or caregiver?

5. How is the child disciplined?

- *After the groups have had sufficient time to develop some questions for each of the five topics, have each group present their questions. Invite other groups to offer feedback if they have any concerns that a question presented needs to be worded differently.*

Activity STOP

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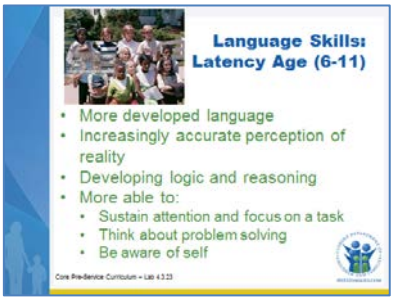

Elementary school age children (6-11) are referred to as the latency age. There are vast differences in physical size, maturity level and language skills. You will meet children in the sixth grade who look like ninth graders, and you will also meet some older elementary school children whose maturity and language development is quite delayed.

Your challenge as an interviewer is to make no assumptions about a child's size and appearance with respect to their language skills. A language assessment must be conducted with a child of any age in order to adapt your interviewing style and questions accordingly.

The language skills of latency age children, including comprehension, are still under development regardless of their age. They are generally more advanced than pre-school children in important ways:

- Expanding vocabulary, comprehension and use of words, including prepositions, kinship, body parts and functions,

sequencing a narrative
- They have an increasingly accurate perception of reality
- They are developing concrete operations (process of logic and reasoning) which increases their understanding of rules
- Their "executive" functioning is developing, are more able to think about problem solving, to sustain attention and focus on a task
- More aware of self

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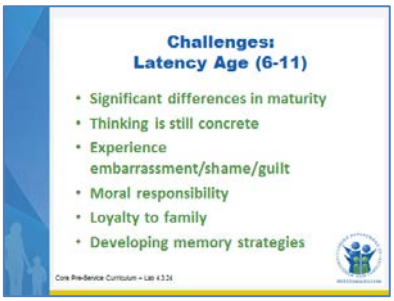

There is range of challenges generally related to interviewing of latency age children in addition to significant differences in maturity:

- Thinking is still concrete
- Experience embarrassment/shame/guilt
- Moral responsibility
- Loyalty to family
- Developing memory strategies

Latency age children may speak with great confidence about dates, times and other details, for example, but not be nearly as accurate as their language would suggest. Therefore it is critical to carefully assess not only their language, but their grasp of abstract concepts. Many of the language challenges that this age experiences are the same as what we learned for pre-school children.

Unlike pre-school children, latency age children have a much greater sense of embarrassment, shame and guilt. They are developing a greater sense of morality and loyalty to their family.

Going through the same interviewing steps is key to setting the stage for your interview:

- Providing and practicing the same "instructions" up front
- Conducting a language assessment

What you are assessing is the same; the techniques need to be different so that an older child does not feel patronized.

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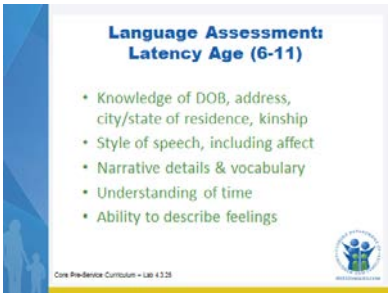

Knowledge of demographics. An interview with a school age child typically starts with an opening of several closed questions to gather their full name, how it is spelled, their full date of birth, where they were born, where they live, including city and state, and who else lives in their home. This will help you learn early in the interview how precise the child's language is in terms of names, addresses, times and details of events.

As you observe these characteristics of the child's language in describing innocuous events, you will get an idea of how much precision you can expect if the child begins to disclose abuse. You can begin to model for the child that you are looking for complete, precise information.

Drawing a family tree with a school age child can include asking about siblings, their names and ages, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. For a child in a blended family, it is useful to know if the child knows about the parents of step-brothers and sisters. Gathering this demographic information will help you assess a little bit about the child's maturity level and depth of family knowledge.

Style of speech and narrative details. You will need to move from the closed questions associated with family demographics to inviting the child to narrate an event that can be used to assess their language skills including style of speech.

For younger children, asking about a recent birthday or a major holiday can be useful. Or, if they have shared any information about their family during the first part of the interview it would be natural to ask benign follow-up questions as part of the assessment process.

For example, if a child says, "My daddy is in jail or prison" during the first part of your interview, that is a detail to come back to after you have developed some rapport and made the child comfortable with the interview process. If the child shared that we just visited daddy last week, it might be useful to ask the child about the visit. "You said you visited your daddy in prison last week. Tell me all about that."

Whatever event is used for narrative practice, you can explore more deeply the child's ability to provide descriptive details and how precisely they can articulate feelings associated with those persons or events. You want to ask questions during their narration that will help you assess their correct use of pronouns, prepositions, understanding of time and use of words.

For the language assessment in latency age child, why would we want the child to first narrate a topic that is not a "sensitive" one?

Endorse and elicit:

- Will be more comfortable to talk about
- Reveals their natural/normal way of speaking
- If it relates to something they said, it shows that you are listening and interested in them
- Helps us learn how to ask the right questions, such as not asking for specific times if they show limited knowledge of

days of the week, months, etc.

What we will learn when a child is discussing a topic they are comfortable with is their natural style of speaking—do they speak in short or long sentences, use simple or more advanced vocabulary, do they speak fast or slowly. You can establish a child's knowledge of night and day, earlier and later, days of the week, and perhaps months. By observing these qualities of the child's speech and language, you can match your language and vocabulary to theirs.

Assessing the child's knowledge and understanding of feelings has some important implications for the interview process. First, the ability to describe his/her own feelings and those of the alleged offender enhances the detail and credibility of the disclosure. Second, by assessing the child's natural affective style when discussing non-traumatic events, you have a baseline that you can compare to the affective style during disclosure of abuse allegations. For example, if you have a child who is normally active and verbal, and that child becomes stiff and withdrawn during abuse disclosure, it may add credibility to the child's statements. Likewise, a quiet, low energy child may become agitated during disclosure, indicating the events being discussed are arousing genuine feelings in the child.

When you get into the disclosure section of the interview, you can compare the child's language during disclosure to that used during the description of innocuous events. As a rule of thumb, you would expect the language level to match. Sometimes children use words during disclosure that they don't understand. For example, one child used the word "rape," but could not say what it meant. Therefore, although you have assessed the child's language level during developmental assessment, it is important during disclosure to make sure you precisely understand what the child means if they use sexually explicit terms like rape, intercourse and oral sex.

Display Slide 4.3.26

Latency age children will be learning how to tell time, days of the week, months and years. Their actual understanding will vary greatly. As an interviewer, you do not want to ask any questions that relate specifically to time unless you have first assessed their level of understanding. Otherwise, your questions will compromise the information they provide. Here are some options that workers have used to assist with assessment of time:

Establish sequencing. To establish the child's capacity for sequencing events you first have to demonstrate the child understands the concepts of "before" and "after." To do so, make two obvious gestures or actions (e.g., drop your pen on the floor then pat the top of your head, etc.,). Since children have a strong tendency to go with the last option make sure the "right" answer is the first one offered (i.e., "Did I drop my pen before [correct] or after [incorrect] I patted my head?"). Then reverse the question, again paying attention to making sure the correct answer is the first one offered ("Did I pat my head after [correct] or before [incorrect] I dropped my pen?").

Once you are sure the child understands before and after you can explore (when appropriate) what other known events may have occurred simultaneously ("*Toy Story* was playing on TV") or around ("It happened after we moved into our new house") the event/topic in question. Even though you may not isolate an exact date, you may be able to narrow the time frame considerably. Family birthdays or major holidays occurring before or after the event can be particularly useful because children tend to

remember these significant events.

Use pictures of holidays *to establish sequencing*. Collect an assortment of pictures for events such as birthdays, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Then ask the child to put them in sequential order. You can also use the cards as a visual aid when directly questioning the child about the time of the alleged incident. Even though you may not isolate an exact date, you may be able to narrow the time frame considerably using this technique. If you are confident the child understands the concepts "before" and "after," you can question the child about the time of the alleged incident relative to the times illustrated by the cards.

***Establish the child's knowledge of night and day, earlier and later*.** You can ask questions like "When do you eat breakfast?" Then ask "Is that daytime or nighttime or what?"

Learn the child's knowledge of time frames of familiar things, ("How long is the 'Barney' show.") You can check a child's ability to tell time by having them *read a watch or clock*, both conventional and digital.

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As mentioned earlier, there are a lot of feeling faces charts on the market which are useful in finding out what level of language the child has for feelings. Charts with only faces can be used to determine if the child has accurate language for the various feelings.

The interviewer can use cards with feeling faces or draw feeling faces and see if the child can match feeling faces with feeling words, and then ask the child to give examples of situations which elicit each particular feeling.

Another technique is to ask the child a series of questions beginning, "How do/would you feel when/if….?" For example, "How would you feel if you dropped your lunch tray in front of everyone at school?"

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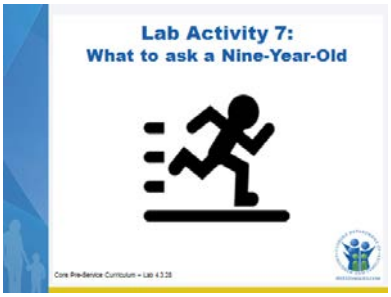

Lab Activity 7: What to ask a Nine-Year-Old

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to have participants integrate the information they learned in Module 3 about child development with information just learned about appropriate questions. In processing this as a group, they will identify specific questions they would ask a nine year old to learn information about child functioning. Point out to participants that if they were developing the child functioning domain for an FFA, they would also observe the child with parents and interview others who know the child. That said, there is a lot that they can learn directly from the child with thoughtfully-planned questions.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Instruct participants that in small groups of 4-6 participants, they will develop specific, correctly worded* ***OPEN*** *questions that they would ask a nine year old to learn information from a child about child functioning. They are to use the information chart in their participant guides from Module 2, "Ages and Associated Characteristics" to guide the development of questions.*
- *The information they are to learn about from the child includes*

observations (for example, show me how you can write your name).

- *Each group should select a recorder and put their answers on newsprint. They are to develop 3-5 questions for each of the following categories:*

1. What are the child's physical skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

2. What are the child's socio-emotional skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

3. What are the child's cognitive skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

4. What is the child's relationship with his/her parent or caregiver?

5. How is the child disciplined?

After the groups have had sufficient time to develop some questions for each of the five topics, have each group present their questions. Invite other groups to offer feedback if they have any concerns that a question presented needs to be worded differently.

Activity STOP

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The last group of children to discuss are adolescents.

Given what you know about teens, what do you think are some of the <u>positive aspects</u> of this age group in terms of our interviewing?

Endorse and elicit:

- Much more developed language skills
- Know difference between truth and lie
- Abstract thinking
- More self-conscious
- Idealistic
- Critical thinking (sometimes!)
- Enthusiasm/energy
- Play to the audience
- Sense of humor
- Thinking about their future
- Spontaneous

What are going to be some of the challenges in interviewing teens?

Endorse:

- Think they know it all, but don't
- Not quite ready for adult decision making
- Tend to be impulsive
- Talking to a stranger is boring
- Opinionated as to what is cool/not cool
- Harder to obtain a disclosure as they know what consequences for parent might be
- More likely to lie about what happened for their own gain (e.g.,, wanting to go live with another parent not related to a maltreatment issue)

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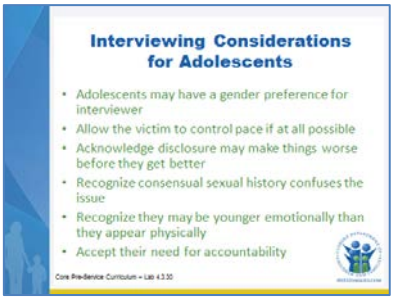

The balance of physical and emotional development tends to be uneven and erratic in adolescents. Perpetrators frequently use physical maturity of the teen victim as an excuse for their behavior. Physical maturity is also frequently used to "guilt-trip" the victim. An interviewer must keep in mind that an adolescent may be much younger emotionally than they appear physically.

In addition to the uneven development, being exposed to severe trauma, especially due to severe maltreatment tends to delay normal emotional development.

Intellectually, adolescents tend to use somewhat concrete reasoning, and to focus on immediacy and short-range solutions to problems. They have a tendency to be egocentric, as though there is an imaginary audience which thinks like and judges the adolescent.

Interviewers may find success with using empathic emotional responses (e.g., "you felt betrayed", "you don't think anyone understands you", "you were hurt and angry", etc.,).
It is best to avoid mirroring the adolescent's "coolness." Instead, acknowledging the uniqueness of the adolescent (e.g., identifying and recognizing their affinity for sports, art, drama, science, music, love of animals, etc.,) and especially the recognition of their personal values ("you're very loyal to your friends/family", etc.,) is a much more effective means of establishing a good rapport.

Adolescents enjoy using "in" language rather than more formal

styles. Thus a casual conversational style is usually most effective. However, do not try to match their language. Despite the apparent maturity, adolescents frequently have a fragmented understanding of questions, and provide fragmented answers. They will typically be reluctant to ask for clarification, so the interviewer must be careful to follow up to assure understanding of questions and answers. Listening skills of the adolescent may be hampered by self-consciousness due to the imaginary audience, therefore it can be useful to use some repetition. The interviewer should guard against showing frustration.

Gender differences between the interviewer and adolescent can be extremely important especially as it relates to feelings of embarrassment and an unwillingness for the teenager to discuss sexual abuse with a member of the opposite sex (or depending upon the individual dynamics) member of the same sex. This will be explored more fully in your specialty tracks, but for now, always remain cognizant of the fact that your gender could be problematic to disclosure in certain children or adolescents.

Avoid coming across as an authority figure (e.g., overly formal, directive or aloof, etc.,). To minimize the power or authority issue allow the victim to control the pace of the interview if at all possible. Remember you are dealing with extremely sensitive topics that are likely associated with very strong emotional feelings.

Adolescents are striving for emancipation, and are reluctant to disclose loss of control to any authority figure. This reluctance is especially common with sexual abuse – they are often eager to emphasize how consensual the nature of the relationship was or is. Therefore, interviewers should be extremely cautious to avoid coercive or authoritative tactics.

Sexual abuse interferes with normal developmental unfolding. Further, adolescents are frequently engaged in consensual sex with age-mates, which confuses the issue for the adolescent. Victims

sometimes cannot differentiate between sexual activity which is chosen, and that which is coerced. Nevertheless, they may feel damaged and sense that others can see it.

Embarrassment at a rapidly changing body combines with the shame of victimization to create a victim who is very reluctant to speak openly. The interviewer may counteract this to some degree by providing information (point out some statistics about the frequency of sexual abuse) and discussion to reduce the stigmatization.

One of the more difficult issues to explore with an adolescent is the acknowledgement that their disclosure may temporarily make thing worse in their life before they get better. These challenges may include the need for medical examinations, family members not believing what they are disclosing, and the possibility that they may have to testify in court at some point, just to name a few. It's essential that the youth is provided with age appropriate information to understand what lies ahead for them while emphasizing this path is the only way the abuse is likely to stop.

Another aspect of the abuse dynamics you should explore and address with the adolescent is their need for accountability. Accountability in this instance is multifaceted. You need to make sure as a result of your interview that (1) the child or adolescent clearly understands that they are not responsible for what happened to them and, (2) that the adults who abused them are solely responsible for their actions. Understanding both aspects of accountability is essential for the child because as a result of disclosure they will likely soon be talking with medical and law enforcement personnel, as well as potentially having to attend dependency and criminal court proceedings. Acquiring the requisite skills to handle this discussion with the child or adolescent adeptly and with sensitivity will be explored in depth in your specialty track.

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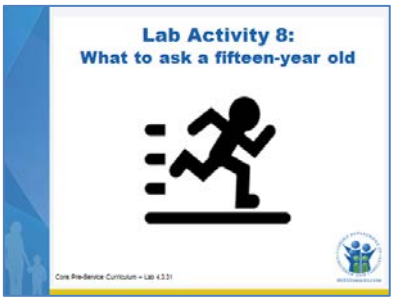

Lab Activity 8: What to ask a Fifteen-Year-Old

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to have participants integrate the information they learned in Module 3 about child development with information just learned about appropriate questions. In processing this as a group, they will identify specific questions they would ask a fifteen year old to learn information about child functioning. Point out to participants that if they were developing the child functioning domain for an FFA, they would also observe the child with parents and interview others who know the child. That said, there is a lot that they can learn directly from the child with thoughtfully-planned questions.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Instruct participants that in small groups of 4-6 participants, they will develop specific, correctly worded* ***OPEN*** *questions that they would ask a fifteen-year -old to learn information from a child about child functioning. They are to use the information chart in their participant guides from Module 2, "Ages and Associated Characteristics" to guide the development of questions.*
- *The information they are to learn about from the child includes observations (for example, show me how you can write your name).*
- *Each group should select a recorder and put their answers on newsprint. They are to develop 3-5 questions for each of the following categories:*

6. What are the child's physical skills? Are there any indicators of concern?
7. What are the child's socio-emotional skills? Are there any indicators of concern?
8. What are the child's cognitive skills? Are there any indicators of concern?
9. What is the child's relationship with his/her parent or caregiver?
10. How is the child disciplined?

- *After the groups have had sufficient time to develop some questions for each of the five topics, have each group present their questions. Invite other groups to offer feedback if they have any concerns that a question presented needs to be worded differently.*

Activity STOP

In the next unit, we take all that we have learned about child interviewing and language assessment, and discuss the heart of the interview; has a maltreatment occurred, and whether the child is in present or impending danger.

Unit 4.4: Learning About Maltreatment and Safety

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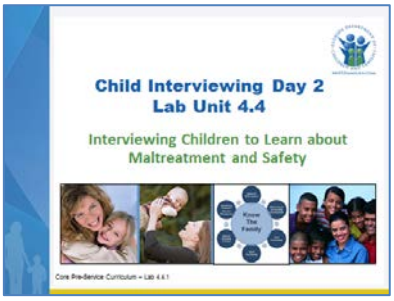

Time:

Unit Overview: This unit prepares participants for interviewing children to construct a narrative for all information domains, moving from general and less sensitive topics to the most sensitive topic, a maltreatment disclosure. Participants will learn how to gather sufficient information related to an allegation and when appropriate, to disengage from the interview process because enough information has been obtained from the child to request a forensic interview and notify law enforcement that "criminal conduct" has been disclosed by the child. Participants will also learn when, and how, to use the "safe" house drawings to learn about maltreatment.

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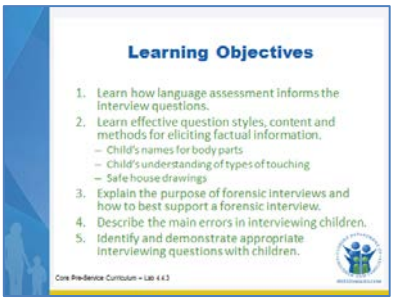

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn how language assessment informs the interview questions.
2. Learn effective question styles, content and methods for eliciting factual information.
3. Child's names for body parts.

4. Child's understanding of types of touches.
5. Safe house drawings.
6. Explain the purpose of forensic interviews and how to best support a forensic interview.
7. Describe the main errors in interviewing children.
8. Identify and demonstrate appropriate interviewing questions with children.

Display Slide 4.4.4

During any child interview you will go through the steps of opening the interview: rapport building, offering a personal expression, explaining why you are there, and providing the interview instructions. If you already know the child and are in the process of building trust, you can affirm that the child remembers the instructions. You always want to child to be the expert on their experiences, and to share with you what is really happening.

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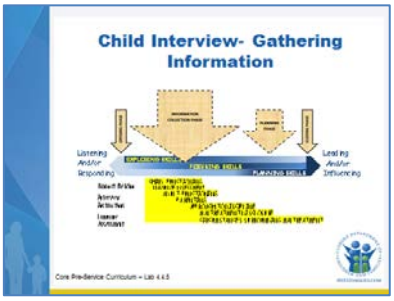

Following rapport building and language assessment, we will move in a non-threatening manner into focused questioning regarding information about each of the information domains. We will use the child functioning domain to conduct a language assessment as well as to learn about child functioning. We will work through the

other information domains to learn about their day to day family life, the adult functioning of their parents, their care, supervision, parenting and discipline, and last, the maltreatment allegation and surrounding circumstances.

It is important to remember that a significant number of our investigations involve lack of supervision or exposure to domestic violence. Children may be living in a pervasive state of danger, needing protective actions, and you will not have any specific allegation of physical or sexual abuse.

Before approaching the child about a specific allegation of abuse or neglect, we will focus the interview on other, potentially less sensitive, aspects of the child's life.

Should the child share important information associated with the allegation during the discussion of "more general" family information, you should directly follow-up and continue to explore the disclosure. We will be discussing the allegation follow-up in depth today.

What are we looking for in general about a child's current living arrangement and circumstances that will give us information about a child who may be in danger?

Trainer Note: We want to ensure that participants understand the bigger picture of what creates danger for children. While learning how to get a specific disclosure of maltreatment is essential to know, it is also imperative to know how to develop the bigger picture of dynamics in a family. While answers such as "caregiver protective capacities, danger threats, and/or the presence of family conditions and behaviors that pose a danger to a child" are correct answers, elicit from participants "tell me more" to have them identify the more detailed information to know whether children are in danger, or whether caregiver protective capacities are adequate. Participants should also be reminded that we never assume that when children are placed with other caregivers that they are "safe" from danger.

Endorse and elicit:

- No resources to meet the child's basic safety needs

- Dangerous living arrangements
- Intentions of parent/caregiver to hurt a child with no remorse on parent's part
- Extremely unrealistic expectations or extremely negative perceptions of a child
- No adult in the home will perform essential parental duties and responsibilities
- A lack of parenting knowledge, skills, and motivation essential to protecting a child
- Violent caregivers
- Caregivers who cannot control their behavior
- Caregivers who fear they will maltreat the child and/or who request placement

How does a child act who lives in a safe home?

Trainer Note: Be sure to ask participants to reframe any negative conditions as positives. For example, when they say, no indicators of abuse or neglect, ask "what does that look like?" Reinforce that a family functioning assessment must describe the details of what they observed, information gathered and assessed, not what they did not observe, or what anyone "denied." For example, "child denied that he has ever been hit," or "child denies that father hits mother" do not contribute to a complete, descriptive picture of a safe child.

Endorse and elicit:

- Child demonstrates age appropriate abilities, such as physical skills, language skills
- Child's overall appearance is clean
- Child is openly assertive
- Appears to feel comfortable speaking his/her mind
- Appears comfortable in presence of parent/caregiver
- Is able to describe details of home as being safe (older child)
- Will give indication of supportive siblings and family members
- More likely to report regular contact with others outside the home and be able to identify those with whom they have

contact.

What we have described here is child functioning that usually results from a child living in a safe home. That said, there are resilient children who are doing well in school and who appear to be well-cared for who might be victims of familial sexual abuse, or who live with parents who despite a serious alcohol or addiction problem are holding down a job and providing for their children.

When a case manager is managing an ongoing case, you will be assessing what aspects of child functioning, referred to in the FFA Ongoing as strengths and needs, should be addressed with interventions or treatment while you are also working with the parents to achieve changes in family conditions and protective capacities. Your child interviews will be a critical component of gathering information for the assessment of child strengths and needs.

When a case manager is closing a case and considering how a child functions at the time of closure, you naturally will compare the child's functioning to standards as to what a "normal, safe child" looks like. We know that the child's experiences and history can contribute to limited or poor functioning even as our interventions draw to an end. Bearing that fact in mind, you will have to judge carefully how close a child's functioning comes to the standard we've discussed for a "safe child." We recognize maltreated children may be doing much better than when we first encountered them, but they are still not at 100% of the standard of how a child functions who has always resided in a safe home.

When comparing the functioning of a child you've served to the standard identified above, the evidence may be an indication of a safe home rather than being conclusive of a safe home. More realistically, you may be looking at degrees of functioning that are consistent or indicative of a safe home.

You will not know with reasonable certainty whether a child is safe

or not safe until you have interviewed the child, the parents/caregivers, and other persons to corroborate, validate and assess all of the information that is needed to determine whether a child is in danger or not.

That said, the child is a key eye witness to what is happening in the home, and with effective skills, you can help the child tell their story. There are many topics you need to learn about. The more details you can gain regarding the child's life and experiences, the more equipped you will be to make decisions which will protect them.

Maltreatment may not be perceived by the child as out of the ordinary. Children who have experienced abuse have frequently experienced a variety of forms of maltreatment, and they do not know what you are interested in knowing about. Their experiences of abuse may be ordinary daily events, and not something they think anyone is interested in. Abuse focused questions provide memory retrieval cues. Children need adults to provide the cognitive structures and cues to focus upon the topic of interest, and to recall memories they have stored.

In order to learn from the child about adult functioning, parenting and discipline, we can ask a child specific but non-leading questions pertaining to such topics as:

- Home environment
- Care routines
- People in child's life
- Discipline/Physical Abuse/Family violence
- Substance abuse

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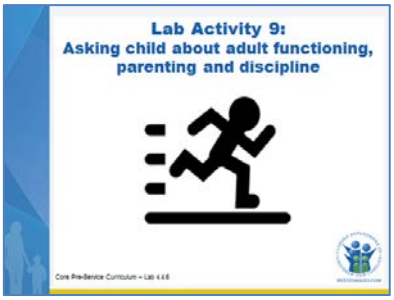


Lab Activity 9: What to ask a Child to Learn about Adult Functioning, Parenting and Discipline

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to have participants think about the other information domains (adult functioning, parenting and discipline) in terms of 1) what they might learn from children, and 2) to craft the types of questions that would be appropriate for information gathering. Tell participants that there might be some closed questions, but that most of the questions they develop should be open. In processing this as a small group, they will be assigned one specific age; one group will be assigned the four-year old, one group will be assigned a nine-year old, and one group will be assigned a fifteen-year old. It is recommended that groups not be larger than 4-6 participants.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Identify small groups of 4-6 participants and assign a child age (4 year old, nine year old, fifteen year old)*
- *INSTRUCT PARTICIPANTS TO LEAVE THEIR PARTICIPANT GUIDES CLOSED!*
- *Tell participants they will have fifteen minutes to come up with as many questions as possible on their topics for the child age assigned. Each person in the group should contribute at least one question. One person in the group will report out the results of their work.*
- *Instruct participants that in small groups of 4-6 participants, they will identify questions for each of the following topics:*

    1. Home environment
    2. Care routines
    3. People in child's life
    4. Discipline/Physical Abuse/Family violence
    5. Substance abuse

- *After the groups have had sufficient time to develop some questions for each of the five topics, have each group present their questions for the child assigned.*
- *Refer participants to the sample questions in their participant guides.*

Activity STOP

MENU OF QUESTIONS FOR CHILDREN ABOUT CARE ROUTINES AND FAMILY CONDITIONS *(Lab PG: 30-32)*

Note: *Adaptations based on child's language skills may be necessary.*

Questions about the home environment:

- Who lives at your house?
- Who comes to visit?
- Tell me what your house is like.
- Where do you sleep?
- Where do others sleep? Do you have a bed?
- Who cleans?
- Where do the pets go to the bathroom?
- Who does the laundry?
- What do you like/dislike about your house?

Questions about care routines:

- Who takes care of you?
- How do they do it?
- Are there things you like about how they do it?
- Are there any things you don't like?
- Who puts you to bed? What time?
- Who cooks?
- What meals do you eat?
- What do you eat?
- Are there any times when there's no food?
- What do you do then?
- When ____ isn't there, who takes care of you? (If the child describes being alone, ask ...)
- Is there someone you can call?
- How long are you alone?
- Are there any younger kids you look out for?
- Who helps you get dressed?
- Who sees you get to school?

- Who takes care of you when you're sick or hurt?
- Tell me about bath time.

Questions about people:

- Tell me about _____.
- What is _____ like?
- Are there things you and _____ do together?
- Do you do things alone with _____?
- Are there things you like about _____?
- Are there things you don't like about _____? What?
- Are there things _____does to you that you don't like?
- Are there things _____does to your body that you don't like?
- To what part?
- Does _____ hurt you in any way? How?
- Who hurts your feelings?
- Who are the people who live in your house?
- Does someone else come to the house a lot? Do they spend the night?
- Do you have any secrets with grownups? Or, "Things you're not supposed to talk about?

Questions about discipline/physical abuse/violence:

- What happens when you (or anybody else) get into trouble?
    - What else happens?
- What happens when ___ gets mad?
- Tell me about scary things people do at your house.
- Tell me how your parents settle arguments.
- Can you tell me how your mom got the bruise?
- What ways do they punish at your house?
- To spank, do they use a hand or something else?
    - What does that feel like?
    - How long does it hurt?
    - Does it ever leave a mark?
    - Is it a red mark or a bruise?
    - How long does it take for it to go away?
- Do your parents ever disagree about what to do when you get into trouble?
- Did you ever have to go to the doctor because of getting into trouble?

Questions about substance abuse:

- What is your favorite drink?
- What do your parents like to drink?
- Does anyone at your house smoke?

- What do they smoke?
- Tell me how your parents relax or have fun.
- How do your parents act after they drink?
  - Tell me more about how they act.
- Who are your parent's friends?
  - What happens when they come over?
- Do your parents drink things you can't?
- Do your parents eat/take things you can't?

Trainer Note: This next section was developed to include information used with permission from the Children's Advocacy Center, of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court, Tampa Florida; "How to Talk to Children" which was developed for first responders.

Now we will discuss interviewing children to learn about possible maltreatment and any surrounding circumstances. As you learned at the beginning of the child interviewing unit, forensic interviews are conducted when criminal conduct involving a child is suspected. Florida has Child Protection Teams, sometimes located as part of Children's Advocacy Center, that have specialized expertise in forensic interviewing. Nearly all of these centers have forensic interviewing rooms, observation areas for law enforcement and CPIs to observe the interview, and recording equipment to videotape a child's interview and disclosure.

You will learn more in your specialty track as to when and how you must refer a child to the local Child Protection Team for a medical exam and a forensic interview. These teams are a valuable resource; it is important to know when, and how to utilize their expertise and resources. It is as important to be sure we know what to do, and what not to do, in our interviews with children as first responders.

Display Slide 4.4.7

These are photos of the interviewing rooms at the Children's Advocacy Center, of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court, Tampa, Florida.

Display Slide 4.4.8

Recording the forensic interview has multiple purposes:

- It is a tool in a joint investigation for multiple partners to watch the interview at the same time (or later)
- It reduces the number of times the child has to talk about the alleged incident
- It ensures that the information is obtained using forensic techniques that can withstand the possible scrutiny of criminal proceedings
- Video records the child's affect as well as their statement and descriptive details provided

Depending upon a community's resources and local protocol, the Child Protective Investigator will most often be the first responder to a scene where there is any allegation of child maltreatment, including allegations of child sexual abuse. Sometimes, an

allegation of sexual abuse will not be revealed until after a child has been placed in out of home care. In such instances, a new report must be made and a new investigation conducted.

Display Slide 4.4.9 ***(Lab PG: 33)***

It is critical that the CPI conducting the investigation have a clear understanding of how to properly evaluate the situation and conduct the initial investigation interview. If a child in out of home care first discloses to their case manager, the case manager must also know what to ask, and what not to ask in order for the information you gather from your interview to be considered "reliable" should any court proceedings follow, either dependency or criminal.

Trainer Note: This is a good point to at least introduce the different levels of evidence needed for different types of legal proceedings (dependency and criminal) without going too deeply. These will be covered in specialty tracks.

The information that you gather in all of the information domains is important. The child's information, as the key witness to what has happened to him/her, is crucial on a number of levels:

- Contributes information to know if child is safe or not safe
- Provides legal evidence for sheltering a child (probable cause, the lowest standard of evidence in dependency court)
- Provides legal evidence for a dependency petition (preponderance of evidence, higher standard that what is required to shelter a child)
- As a "First Responder," your performance is critical to the rest of any criminal investigation

- As a "First Responder," the relationship you establish with the child, particularly the trust gained, sets the stage for how the child will likely view other adult "helpers" that will soon work with them.

In order to convey information learned from the child to your supervisor, you will need to take notes. In a dependency case or a criminal case, your interview notes may be subpoenaed. Most CPIs find that jotting down short phrases (two or three words) during the interview or writing the notes down immediately after the interview works best. While you have to also enter information into FSFN for each contact and interview made, you can also scan in your handwritten notes. For any subsequent criminal investigation, even the questions you asked to elicit the child's response are crucial to document.

Display Slide 4.4.10 ***(Lab PG: 8)***

The last four steps of the "Ten Step Investigative Interview" presented by Dr. Lyons are:

- "introducing the topic of the allegation made" to the child,
- discussing the allegation
- following up to obtain more details
- discussing more than one incident.

As mentioned earlier, if the child brings up the allegation topic during earlier discussion in the interview you will usually proceed immediately to the allegation. That said, you will never intentionally discuss the allegation without conducting a language

assessment first.

If a child appears eager to jump to the topic of what happened, tell me, how can that be handled?

Endorse:

- Interviewer can make extra effort to clarify age-based language development issue (e.g., use of pronouns, ability to sequence events, etc.,) used when a child discloses.
- Say to child "I really want to hear all about blank" using child's words. "First though, is it okay if we talk about you and your family a little bit?"
- Demonstrate to child you are really interested in what they want to tell you.

If a child appears overly anxious to talk directly about the maltreatment incident do not worry about conducting a language assessment first. Go ahead and explore the maltreatment allegations but don't forget to follow-up with a language assessment prior to moving on to other information domains.

There are several different options for bringing the allegation topic up. To the extent possible, you want to plan in advance which of these is most appropriate given the child's age and what circumstances have been alleged in the intake.

Trainer Note: Review and discuss the following four steps, using the ten step handout in the participant guide (steps 7, 8, 9 and 10). This will give you an opportunity to remind participants that they must do some rapport building, instructions and a language assessment before discussing an allegation.

7. ALLEGATION (If child discloses abuse, go directly to ALLEGATION FOLLOW UP. Determine IN ADVANCE which allegation questions you will ask.)

a. **Tell me why I came to talk to you.**
Or, Tell me why you came to talk to me.
It's really important for me to know why I came to talk to you/you came to talk to me.

b. **I heard you saw**
e.g., "I heard you saw a policeman/doctor/school guidance counselor last week. Tell me what you talked about."

c. **Someone's worried**
e.g., "Is your mom worried that something may have happened to you? Tell me what she is worried about."

d. **Someone bothered you**
e.g., "I heard that someone might have bothered you. Tell me everything about that."

e. **Something wasn't right**
e.g., "I heard that someone may have done something to you that wasn't right. Tell me everything about that."

8. ALLEGATION FOLLOW UP
You said that (repeat allegation). Tell me everything that happened.
e.g., "You said that Uncle Bill hurt your pee-pee. Tell me everything that happened."

9. Follow up with TELL ME MORE and WHAT HAPPENED NEXT questions
Avoid yes/no and forced-choice questions.

10. MULTIPLE INCIDENTS
Did (repeat allegation) happen one time or more than one time?
Tell me everything that happened the time you remember the most.
Tell me everything that happened the first time.
Tell me everything that happened the last time.
Was there another time?

Display Slide 4.4.11 ***(Lab PG: 33)***

Children's memory research.
There is a large body of research on children's memory. The most consistent findings are:

- Young children's memories of events may be less complete, but they are not necessarily less accurate.
- Specific but non-leading questions yield more information. Children do not usually know what the adult is interested in, so using specific questions helps direct their cognitions to your topics of interest.
- With memory cues, children can elaborate on basic, sketchy narratives. Children need adults to provide the scaffolding for memory retrieval. They do not have the cognitive capacity to use strategies adults use.
- Errors increase with the wrong types of questions about peripheral details.

Script Memory is the memory of a repeated event, such as your morning routine, bedtime routine or going to McDonalds. Central, common features can be recalled, but the details of any one specific time might be blurred.
Script memory is memory for "typical" events, or events which are experienced repeatedly.

Episodic Memory is remembering a specific event**.** If the event is personally significant, even preschoolers can remember it and more reliable details can be retrieved

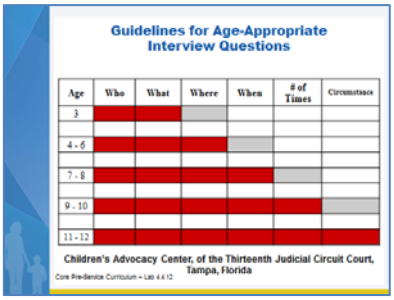
Especially for children who have no understanding of time, the questions about the -time, or time you remember most… are dependable cues to help the child tell details.

Memory for repeated sexual abuse may confuse the details associated with any single event. Children tend to remember important features of script memories and ignore less central details. Distinctions between individual incidents are blurred.

The implication for child interviewing is that abuse repeated over

time may be subject to lack of memory for peripheral details. Children tend to internalize a "script" for how it usually happened, therefore it can be difficult to elicit unique and distinguishing details for a specific incident. This can hurt credibility if the child's account from script memory - of how the abuse usually happened - doesn't mesh with other known facts in a specific incident.

Display Slide 4.4.12 ***(PG: 34)***



This slide is a table from the Tampa forensic interviewing training that shows generally, what details the child of different ages may be able to provide. Your language assessment will still be necessary to assess the child's vocabulary and grasp of abstract concepts (time and numbers). Notice that:

- Even child as young as three can provide details about who (people) and what (things that happened).
- Questions about the place that something happened might be provided by children as young as four.
- Questions specific to "when" are not likely to be provided until around the age of 7-8 years.
- Questions about the number of times something happened may be appropriate around the ages of 9-10.

There are two main errors in child interviewing that relate directly to the use of questions that are not appropriate given the child's age and language skills. The end result is that the interview:

- Elicits false information about abuse.
- Fails to elicit true reports of abuse.

When in doubt, if you are interviewing a child and know for certain that they will have a forensic interview, let the forensic interviewer get the details! That said, you will often not know until after your

interview with a child that a forensic interview is needed.

The following open questions are used when a child has given a disclosure, and more details are needed in order to assess what happened, or did not happen.

Narrative Cue:
"And then what happened?"

Repeat Disclosure:
"You said he hit you?"

Clarification:
"He touched you where?"

Details of Abuse:
"What did that feel like?"

Details of context:
"Tell me about the last time X happened". (pre-school)
"Do you remember when this happened?"

Interviewers are more likely to *elicit false reports* when using directive, multiple choice, yes/no or leading questions. Children may feel coerced to respond and select one of the choices offered by the interviewer. For example, "Did it happen in the bedroom or the bathroom?"

The preferred use of multiple choice questions is for gaining contextual information, rather than for gathering information on actual abusive behavior. For example, if the child did not respond to a focused question such as: "What were you wearing?" you might ask, *"Did you have on your regular day clothes, your pajamas, or something else?"* A good rule of thumb in using multiple choice questions is to give two specific options and end the questions with a neutral option: "*Did it happen in the bedroom, the bathroom, or somewhere else?*"

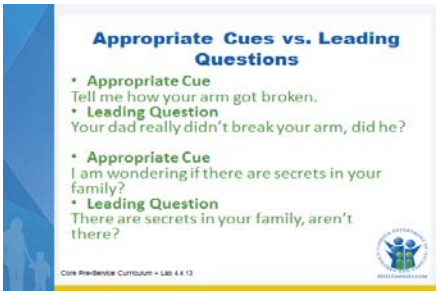
Why this is a good idea?

Endorse:

Because you avoid inadvertently coercing the child to give you one of the first two answers, when neither of the choices you have offered is correct.

If you use a multiple choice question, try to ask it again later, in a different order to see if you get the same answer. Also, sometimes if younger children don't understand the word "or," they'll repeat the last choice you offered. (Principle of recency, in younger children especially, there is a tendency to pick the second, or last, of two choices offered). If you are using multiple choice questions, make sure you know that the child is not always picking the last choice you give. Be careful to change the order of the questions so you don't produce a pattern the child will pick up on.

Display Slide 4.4.13 ***(Lab PG: 35)***



If you know something about what the child has told another family member or professional, and other methods have been unsuccessful, you can focus the child on that information, but you should avoid approaching the child with specific detailed information provided to you by someone else:

"Did you tell Officer Smith about something that happened to you?"

"I heard you were afraid to go home today. Can you tell me why?"

Trainer Note: Discuss each of the following and ask participants why it is considered leading and coercive.

Your dad really didn't break your arm, did he?

You weren't telling the truth about what your uncle did, were you?

Did that really happen, or were you pretending?

Such questions are inappropriate in the context of investigative interviewing. Under all circumstances, an interviewer should be aware of the way in which statements or questions are phrased, in order to avoid leading the child, or suggesting a desired response. The interviewer should also be aware of the potential for the child to feel coerced, and should avoid phrases and body language with coercive qualities.

Beware of using a series of yes/no questions. This can be an extremely leading situation, particularly if the interviewer has a preconceived idea of what may have happened to the child.

There are many opinions about what constitutes a leading question. We know that we must provide children with cues as to what we want to learn about. The following types of questions offer **appropriate cues** without telling the child what the answer should be:

"What do you do when you stay up late at night?

"Do you ever play games with your step-dad?"

"Are there secrets (or things you don't talk about) in your family?"

Most professionals would agree that coercive, obviously leading questioning of children should be avoided. A broad definition of a leading question or statement is that it contains a suggestion of the desired answer.

When you ask about maltreatment, it is best to avoid including the person and the behavior in the same sentence. Separating the person from the behavior makes the questioning less leading.

> ***Person question**: When your mom goes out, who watches you? (Remember to use correct order of events)*
> ***Behavior question:** When your step-dad watches you, tell me what your step dad does?*
> ***Behavior question:** When your step-dad is upset, tell me what happens?*
> ***Behavior questions**: What happens to kids at your house when they get into trouble?*

Display Slide 4.4.14 ***(Lab PG: 35)***

It is important to know when to ask questions with cues about sexual abuse. There are four types of situations that should result in your diligent exploration as to any form of sexual abuse.

- Child may have made intentional disclosure before interview. Disclosure may be about sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult or child.
- Reporter may have expressed concerns about inappropriate, sexualized behaviors that have been observed (masturbation, inappropriate touching of other children or

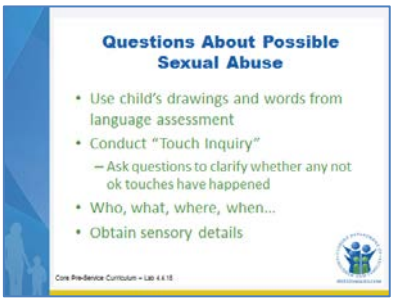
inappropriate statements made by child).

- Perpetrator violence towards adult spouse/partner is alleged or suspected.
- Child lives with other child(ren) who have been sexually abused.

Studies have shown that there is a high correlation of child sexual abuse by perpetrators of domestic violence towards an adult spouse/partner. When any form of domestic violence is suspected in a home, questions about possible sexual abuse should be explored.

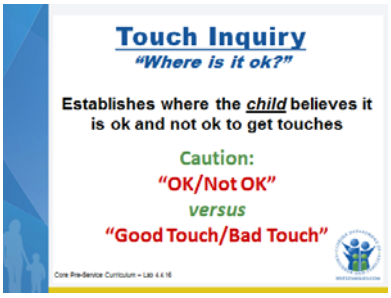
Children in any setting with other children who are known to have been sexually abused are also at greater risk of being sexually abused by those children. This is an ongoing issue that case managers need to know how to continuously assess and be alert to.

Display Slide 4.4.15 ***(Lab PG: 36)***



As with any sensitive topic, your questions will move from the general to the specific. You will first refer back to the child's drawings and words for body parts that you completed during the language assessment. You will then conduct a touch inquiry to determine if the child has experienced touches that are not ok, then you will ask focused questions to identify and clarify the details.

Display Slide 4.4.16 ***(Lab PG: 36)***

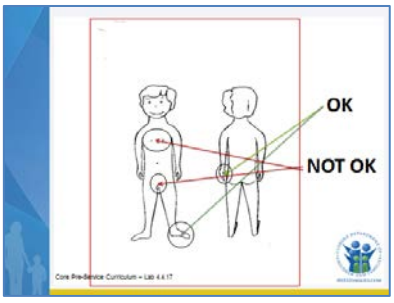


The touch inquiry establishes where the child believes it is ok and not ok to get touches. You need to remain open to the possibility that the child does not know what is "ok or not ok."

Do not use the terms "good touch" or "bad touch". During an investigation of suspected sexual abuse, it is not your job as an investigator to explain to the child the difference between good touch and bad touch. This would have the possible effect of "leading" the child's answers. It would also be upsetting to a child and confusing at this point to hear the news from you and not their parent.

There are many times that it will be appropriate for a case manager to have the "good touch/bad touch" conversation with a child and this will be discussed more in your specialty track.

Display Slide 4.4.17



The drawings used to identify body parts and the child's names should be used to circle or otherwise identify where "ok" touches are, and where not "ok" touches are. The drawings can then be

used to support the further conversation with the child as to who does touch them, whether or not the child has any understanding as to whether the touches are "ok."

If you use the person question or the behavior question and get some type of disclosure, then follow up with simple, one-idea questions, such as:

Who gets touched in a "not ok" way?
What do you get touched with?
What part of you gets touched?
Tell me about the last time X (person's name) touched you on your X (child's name for body part)?

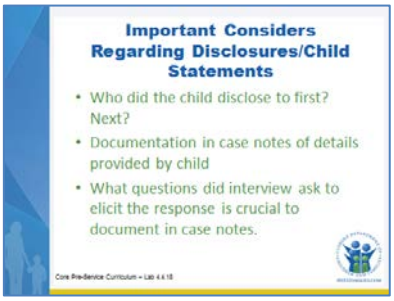
Trainer Note: Refer to ***Lab PG: 37***. There are sample questions to focus on sexual abuse. This should be referred to and briefly reviewed.

Questions to Discuss Possible Sexual Abuse

Questions pertaining to the penis:
Do you know what the private parts are on a boy/girl? How did you learn this?
What do you call this part? (***IMPORTANT*** Use the child's name for the part for further questioning.)
Who has one?
What is it for?
Is it ever used for something besides _____?
Did you ever see one?
Whose?
When?
What was he doing?
Did you ever see it another time?
Did you ever have to do something to one?
Did someone ever do something to you with one?
How did he do that?
Do you remember whether the penis was sticking up or hanging down? (Kids often get confused over the question of "hard" or "soft.")
Did anything come out of the end of it?
What did the stuff look like?
What color was it?
What did it taste like?

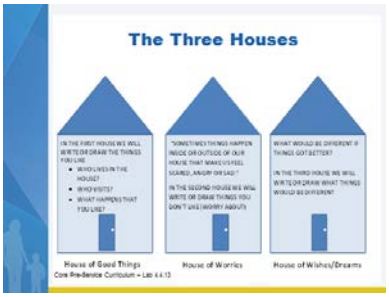
Questions pertaining to the vagina:
What do you call this part? (Use child's word.) Who has a _____?
Do you have one?
What is it for?
Did something ever happen to yours?
Did someone ever hurt you there?
Did someone ever do anything to your _____?
What did they do?
Who was it?
What did _____use when _____did it?
What part of his/her body did he/she use?
Was it on top of your clothes or underneath?
Was it on the outside of your _____ or inside? Do you remember what it felt like?

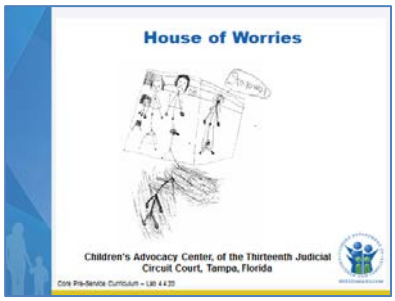
Display Slide 4.4.18 ***(Lab PG: 36)***



- *Who did the child disclose to first? Next?*
- *Documentation in case notes of details provided by child*
- *What questions did interview ask to elicit the response is crucial to document in case notes.*

Display Slide 4.4.19 and 4.4.20 ***(Lab PG: 38)***





An excellent way to help children tell the story of what might be happening in their home is the “Three Houses” story developed by Nikki Weld and Sonja Parker. These homes represent, from the child’s perspective, a house of good things, a house of worries, and a house of dreams or wishes which can be used to help determine if the child feels safe or in danger in their home.

Depending on the child’s age and abilities to draw, or to write, you are going to work together to construct three houses. An older child might be able to draw and write about each house. A younger child might be able to draw the house and people in it and describe what is happening.

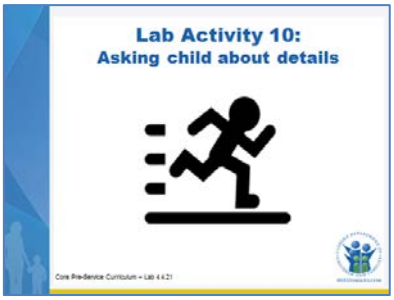
The first house is the house of good things, things the child likes. Ask them who lives in the house, who visits, what happens that in the house that the child enjoys?

The second house is the house of worries. The child will write or draw about their worries. Tell the child that sometimes things happen inside or outside our homes that make us feel scared, angry or sad. “Tell me what the house of worries looks like for you.”

The third house is the house of wishes or dreams. This is a way of asking the child to envision a solution.

“Tell me what would be different in the third house.” This can provide very useful information when you need to develop a safety plan. With the third house, be sure to ask focused questions for the details about what would be happening to make the child feel safe. The three houses are also an important way for case managers to explore with children in out of home care what they like, or do not like, about their temporary care setting.

Display Slide 4.4.21 ***(Lab PG: 39-43)***



Lab Activity 10: Asking Child about Details

Purpose: To determine if the question is appropriate for the stated and to suggest a different form or an entirely new question depending upon the child's given age.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Worksheet for this exercise is provided in Participant Guide (page 40-44).*
- *Based on the guidelines for age appropriate interview questions (refer participants back to 'Age/Guidelines' slide) as well as what you have learned about child language skills, indicate which ages the question is appropriate for, and as necessary given child language skills, rework the questions in your participant guide.*
- *This exercise should be done in small groups.*

Participant Guide Worksheet with Answers for Trainer

1. **Did anything happen when your step-dad watched you?**

2. **Do you remember the last time this happened?**
   Three-year old: Not Appropriate.
   Four-year old: Not Appropriate. Same as above.
   Seven-year old: More specificity. Example: "Was the last time your daddy touched your wiener before or after your 7th birthday (or any recent significant event in child's life)?"
   Nine-year old: Same questioning format as above.
   Eleven year old: Same questioning format as above.

3. **Do you know how old you were when it started?**
   Three-year old: Not appropriate.

Four-year old: Not appropriate.
Seven-year old: More specificity. Example: "Do you know how old you were when your daddy touched your wiener for the first time?"
Nine-year old: More specificity. Example: "You think you were seven when your daddy first touched your wiener. Do you remember which house you were living in at the time (use memory anchor: child's family moved when he was 6 ½)?
Eleven-year old: Same questioning format as above.

4. **Did it happen one time, two times, or lots of times?**
Three-year old: Not appropriate.
Four-year old: Not appropriate.
Seven-year old: More specificity. Example: "Did your father's girlfriend kiss your dick one time, two times, or lots of times?"
Nine-year old: More specificity. Example: **"**When you say your father's girlfriend kissed your penis 'lot of times' do you mean more than 10 times?"
Eleven-year old: Same questioning format as above.

5. **Where did it happen?**
Three-year old: Not appropriate.
Four-year old: More specificity. Example: "Who's house were you at when mommy's boyfriend touched your 'coochie'?"
Seven-year old: More specificity. Example: "Where were you at in mommy's house when her boyfriend touched your 'gina'?"
Nine-year old: More specificity. Example: "So your mother's boyfriend took you into your mom's bedroom before touching your vagina . . . where were you in the bedroom when the boyfriend touched you?"
Eleven-year old: Same questioning format as above.

6. **Where was your mom when it happened?**
Three-year old: Not appropriate.
Four-year old: Not appropriate.
Seven-year old: Not appropriate.
Nine-year old: Not appropriate.
Eleven-year old: More specificity. Example: "What was your mom doing when your brother's penis stood up?"

7. **Where were the other kids?**
Three year old: Not appropriate.
Four year old: Not appropriate.
Seven year old: Not appropriate.
Nine year old: Not appropriate.
Eleven year old: More specificity. Example: "Where was Jamie (older

brother) when Jake (stepfather) made you watch the movie with naked children?
Follow-up: Where was Bobby (younger brother) while you were watching the movie?"

8. **Did it happen in the day or night or both?**
Three-year old: Not appropriate.
Four-year old: Not appropriate.
Seven-year old: More specificity. Example: "Did Mr. Jackson tickle your bootie in the day, at night, or both?"
Nine-year old: Same questioning format as above.
Eleven-year old: More specificity. Example: "You said Mr. Jackson usually only tickled your butt at night. Do you remember if it was early evening or late evening?"

- *Debrief each question as a large group.*

Activity STOP

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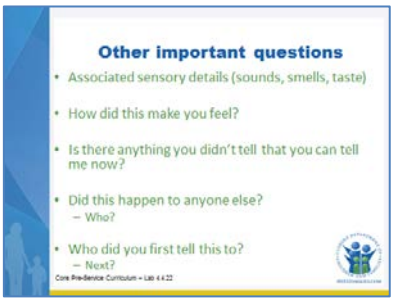

In sexual abuse cases, the associated details about smells and taste are often the descriptors that make a child's disclosure credible, especially when there is no physical evidence.

For a child of any age who has disclosed abuse or neglect, it is important to ask how the event made the child feel. Always use the child's name for the person, and their description of what the person did.

"When (name of person) did (child's words for what happened),

how did it make you feel?"

Probably the most effective strategy for motivating a parent to change is getting them to appreciate the consequences of their actions or inactions through the eyes of their children.

This is important for assessing part of the impact of the parent or perpetrator's behavior on the child, and is the type of detail that is critical for any type of court proceedings, especially when the feelings indicate that the child was fearful. This is an area where you certainly want to be careful not to ask a leading question, such as, "This made you really afraid, didn't it."

After gathering all of the possible details about what has happened to the alleged child victim, ask the child if there is anything they didn't tell that they would like to tell you now. It is surprising how much more information is revealed with the use of this open invitation.

After the anything else question, as the child if "it" has happened to anyone else.

If I am interviewing a child, would that question need some adaptation?

Note that if speaking to a pre-school child, "anyone" is a pronoun that the child will likely not understand.

A better way to ask would be if "it" (using specific child words for "it") happened to other children in the home. A second follow-up could be "other children who live in a different home?"
Also ask who the child first told about the event, and any other people who were told. This will be important information for follow-up interviews with those persons.

TRAINER NOTE: ANECDOTE about words and meaning
One of the most important things to remember in interviewing is that words frequently have different meanings to a child than to an adult. Even adults

using common words can miss each other's meaning. An example of this occurred at a multidisciplinary team meeting recently. A case being discussed had been through the Forensic Evaluation process, and the child had given a disclosure that was somewhat sparse, but did include some credible details and some idiosyncratic features. The interviewer told the rest of the team she had "concerns" about the child's disclosure. The interviewer's meaning for the word "concerns" was that she was concerned that the child had probably been abused. The State Attorney leading the meeting interpreted her meaning of the word "concerns" in the legal sense, and assumed the interviewer was concerned that the disclosure was too weak, and basically not sound enough to be able to pursue prosecution. Following the meeting, the interviewer and SA had further opportunity to discuss the case, and discovered that they had missed each other's meaning for the word "concerns." The example illustrates how easy it is to believe one is using clear language, only to discover that the person hearing the communication has interpreted it quite differently.

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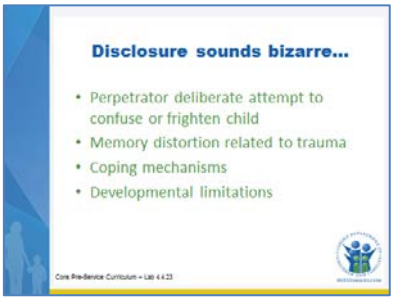

Children sometimes generate bizarre sounding disclosures that are understandable when you explore further, being very conscious of developmental capabilities and other influencing factors, such as:

- Perpetrators' deliberate attempts to confuse or frighten the child. One four-year-old child stated she was sexually abused by a lion. Further investigation revealed the perpetrator actually wore a lion costume when he molested her. It is important to follow up when you get unusual elements in a child's account, rather than dismissing certain things as fantasy elements.

- Traumagenic memory distortion. Sometimes post-trauma

symptoms intrude on the retelling of events. One perpetrator threatened that he would kill the child's mother if she told, and illustrated this by stabbing a pencil through a gerbil. This child could possibly include a report of people being killed or maimed in her disclosure, due to the trauma induced by the killing of the gerbil.

- Coping mechanisms. One six-year-old boy claimed to beat up three 18-year-olds who were raping his sister. He was not really lying -- he truly believed this. For him, this was his way of coping with having to watch helplessly as his sister was raped, and then being raped himself.

- Developmental limitations. One preschool child stated her daddy spit on her leg with his pee-pee. Children make up stories from their own experience to make sense of situations. They fill in the blanks, just as we do sometimes.

In the last unit for child interviewing, we are going to demonstrate the use of the skills we have learned to interview children, first practicing in the safety of the lab and then practicing in the field. You will also practice observation of child interviewing skills both in the lab and in the field.

Unit 4.5: Child Interviewing Skills Practice

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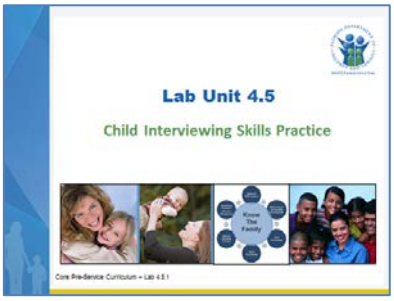

Time:

Unit Overview: This unit provides participants with an opportunity to review the totality of skills learned and expected to be demonstrated in child interviews. Participants will practice child interviewing skills in the lab prior to practicing in the field. Participants will also have an opportunity to observe and record observations of child interviews in the lab before observation in the field. The additional expectation associated with the child interview in the field is that the interviewer also prepares a written summary of what they learned from the child, organizing the information by information domains.

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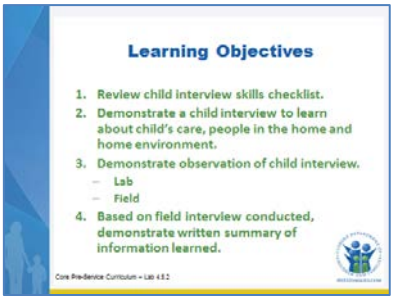

Learning Objectives:

1. Review child interview skills checklist.
2. Demonstrate a child interview to learn about child's care, people in the home and home environment.
3. Demonstrate observation of child interview (Lab and Field).

4. Based on field interview conducted, demonstrate written summary of information learned.

Display Slide 4.5.3 ***(Lab PG: 44-45)***

Trainer Note: This is to serve as brief review of the skills learned and expected to be demonstrated in a child interview. The skills checklist in the participant guide should serve as a tool for personal self-assessment. This same outline of skills will be used for observations of child interviews. Briefly review each interview phase and associated skills, engaging participants in active discussion to demonstrate their knowledge of each item. At this stage, this information should not be provided as a lecture. Note that planning is omitted as this relates to interventions needed and will be covered in specialty tracks, as will interview closings.

Although bringing the interview to a close has not been covered in any depth in this lab, its inclusion at this point sets the main expectations as to how to arrange for successful closure. Use the three slides below and related section from the skills checklist to walk through the material. Invite participant questions and any needs for clarification.

1. Opening Phase of Interview

a. Build rapport
- Introduce self and job in simple way
- Explain interview purpose and what will happen after
- Give child chance to ask questions

b. Provide interview instructions
- "Don't know" instruction
- "Don't understand" instruction
- "You're wrong" instruction
- Ignorant interviewer
- Promise to tell the truth
- Use of positive reinforcement

c. Conduct language assessment
   - Style and attention span
   - Pretend vs. real (truth/lie)
   - Child words (Names) for family members
   - Child words for anatomy
   - Comprehension of abstract concepts (time, numbers)
   - Ability to provide descriptive details

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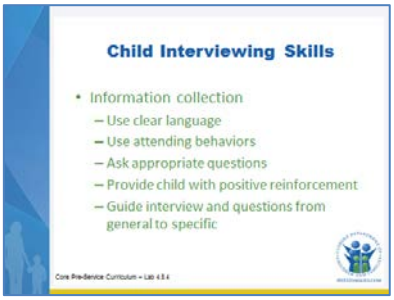

Information collection

a. Use clear language
   - Interviewing style matched to child's style
   - Use of "easy" words
   - Use of child words
   - Clarify child use of words
   - Use specific names instead of pronouns

b. Use attending behaviors, especially psychological following

c. Ask appropriate questions
   - Avoid use of sentences with more than one idea
   - Alert child with new "frame" when shifting topics
   - Help child organize the telling of his/her story
   - Ask child to demonstrate rather than explain abstract concepts
   - Clarify meaning of important words and information
   - Avoid use of "negatives"

d. Provide child with positive reinforcement for instruction use through-out the interview

e. Guide interview and questions from general to specific

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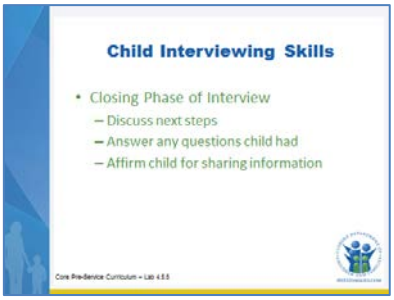


Interview Closing

a. Discuss next steps
b. Answer any questions child had
c. Affirm child for sharing information

CHILD INTERVIEWING SKILLS CHECKLIST
(Lab PG: 44-45)

1. Opening Phase of Interview
   a. Build rapport
      - Introduce self and job in simple way
      - Explain interview purpose and what will happen after
      - Give child chance to ask questions
   b. Provide interview instructions
      - Don't know instruction
      - Don't understand instruction
      - You're wrong instruction
      - Ignorant interviewer
      - Promise to tell the truth
      - Use of positive reinforcement
   c. Conduct language assessment
      - Style and attention span
      - Pretend vs. real (truth/lie)
      - Child words (Names) for family members
      - Child words for anatomy
      - Comprehension of abstract concepts (time, numbers)
      - Ability to provide descriptive details

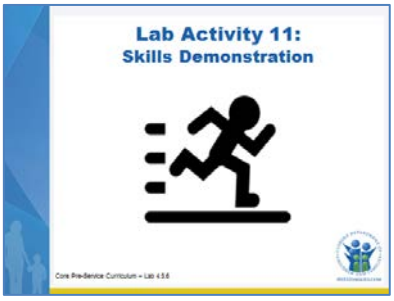
2. Information collection
   a. Use clear language
      - Interviewing style matched to child's style
      - Use of "easy" words

- Use of child words
- Clarify child use of words
- Use specific names instead of pronouns

b. Use attending behaviors, especially psychological following
c. Ask appropriate questions
   - Avoid use of sentences with more than one idea
   - Alert child with new "frame" when shifting topics
   - Help child organize the telling of his/her story
   - Ask child to demonstrate rather than explain abstract concepts
   - Clarify meaning of important words and information
   - Avoid use of "negatives"
d. Provide child with positive reinforcement for instruction use through-out the interview
e. Guide interview and questions from general to specific

3. Interview Closing
   a. Discuss next steps
   b. Answer any questions child had
   c. Affirm child for sharing information

Display Slide 4.5.7 ***(Lab PG: 46-50)***



Lab Activity 11: Demonstrating Child Interviewing Skills

Time: 1.5 hour

Purpose: This unit provides opportunities for participants to practice the child interviewing skills they have learned thus far to learn information about child functioning, adult functioning, parenting and discipline. They will also practice observing, giving and receiving feedback.

Trainer Instructions:

1. *Designate small groups of three participants. Each participant will take turns as listener, person being interviewed (5 year old Matt) and observer. Observer will use the "Child Interviewing Skills Observations" tool in participant guide.*
2. *Each group will practice using the hotline intake summary provided for five year-old Matt when it is their turn to be the "interviewee." The person who role plays Matt can take the creative liberty to make things up about their home life with the following parameters:*
   - *Matt is an average five year old in terms of communication skills*
   - *Matt is an active child, but reasonably cooperative with interviewer*
3. *The interviewer will interview Matt to learn about:*
   - *Child functioning*
   - *Home environment*
   - *Care routines*
   - *People in child's life*
   - *Discipline/Physical Abuse/Family violence*
   - *Substance abuse*
4. *The person conducting the interview should have five minutes to prepare for the interview. They might want to review the material on pre-school language assessment and solutions. Each role play should take no longer than 20 minutes.*
5. *Each small group's debrief should follow each interview practice, following this order:*
6. *Person who conducted the interview goes first with self-assessment, using the checklist of skills. Self-assessment must begin with "Here's what I felt I did well" before discussing "here's what I want to work on."*
7. *Allowing the person who was the child to go second. What made the interview easy; what made it difficult. Give specific behavioral feedback to person who conducted interview.*
8. *The Observer should then provide their feedback last, endorsing what has already been said, adding other things noticed.*
9. *After all role plays and group debriefs have occurred, conduct a brief discussion with group to identify any common themes.*
10. *What skills are we experiencing beginning proficiency with?*
11. *What skills will take more practice?*

Activity STOP

LAB ACTIVITY 11:
HOTLINE INTAKE FOR INTERVIEW WITH MATT

The hotline intake alleges that mother recently tested positive for methamphetamine and admitted to using during her monthly visit with her probation officer. Mom has her three children, Jesse (age 9), Matt (age 5) and Luke (age 2) living with her. These children were under mom's care while she was using and under the influence. Mom lives alone, although the reporter knows that maternal grandmother helps care for the children. Mom is currently unemployed. It appears that Jesse takes care of his brothers often. Matt is an active 5 year old and appears to be smart for his age. Matt has not been in day care or pre-K for the last week as he did not have his physical completed or the required paperwork. He is excited about starting school. Luke is not yet speaking or potty trained.

CHILD INTERVIEWING SKILLS OBERVATIONS (PARTICIPANT GUIDE)

PERSON CONDUCTING OBSERVATION_____

PERSON OBSERVED_____

INSTRUCTIONS:
This tool is for purposes of recording information about skills used during a child interview. The observations should "catch" behaviorally specific details of some positive and negative examples. It is not expected to capture an analysis of every interviewing skill observed, only the highlights. Observations on all five of the instructions must be included.

1. **Opening Phase of Interview**
   a. Build rapport
      - Introduce self and job in simple way
      - Explain interview purpose and what will happen after
      - Give child chance to ask questions

   b. Provide interview instructions
      - Don't know instruction
      - Don't understand instruction

- You're wrong instruction
- Ignorant interviewer
- Promise to tell the truth
- Use of positive reinforcement

c. Conduct language assessment
   - Style and attention span
   - Pretend vs. real (truth/lie)
   - Child words (Names) for family members
   - Child words for anatomy
   - Comprehension of abstract concepts (time, numbers)
   - Ability to provide descriptive details

2. Information collection

a. Use clear language
   - Interviewing style matched to child's style
   - Use of "easy" words
   - Use of child words
   - Clarify child use of words
   - Use specific names instead of pronouns

b. Use attending behaviors especially psychological following

c. Ask appropriate questions
   - Avoid use of sentences with more than one idea
   - Alert child with new "frame" when shifting topics
   - Help child organize the telling of his/her story
   - Ask child to demonstrate rather than explain abstract concepts
   - Clarify meaning of important words and information
   - Avoid use of "negatives"

d. Provide child with positive reinforcement for instruction use through-out the interview

e. Guide interview and questions from general to specific

3. Interview Closing

a. Discuss next steps

b. Answer any questions child had

c. Affirm child for sharing information

Trainer Note: Use the field activity instructions and associated field tools to review all expectations for field work that follows the child interviewing lab.

Refer participants to ***Lab PG: 51***

Field Activities for Child Interviews

1. Conduct a field observation of a child interview, documenting your observations on the "**CHILD INTERVIEWING SKILLS OBERVATIONS"** in your participant guide. Remember to develop a working agreement with the person you observe. Any of the following types of professionals may be observed:
   - CPI
   - Case Manager
   - Adoptions Specialist
   - Independent Living Specialist
   - Child Protection Team/Children's Advocacy Center forensic interviewer (this would need to be worked out with your supervisor)

   Try to "catch" detailed examples of effective skills observed, and some examples of missed opportunities. The goal is not to capture a detailed analysis of all skills observed, just highlights. Bring your written observations to Lab 5 as we will begin with a debriefing.

2. Conduct a child interview that is observed by another participant from this class, a field support consultant, or other individual as agreed by your trainer and supervisor. The person who observes you is expected to record their observations and conduct a feedback session with you.

3. The interview may be any of the following:
   - A child who is part of your extended family network, or a family friend.
   - A child in foster care (this would need to be worked out with your supervisor)

   The purpose of the interview is to use all of your child interviewing skills, including practice of the instructions and language assessment, to learn from the child about the following:
   a. Child functioning
   b. Home environment
   c. Care routines
   d. People in child's life
   e. Discipline

4. Following the interview, you will develop a written summary of what you learned from the child, using the "Summary of Child Interview" provided. The summary will require that you organize what you have learned into the information domains of child functioning, adult functioning, parenting, and discipline. You will be turning in your written summary to the trainer when you return to Lab 5.

*Refer participants to **Lab PG: 57**.*

Summary of Child Interview I Conducted

Interviewer
Name:_____

Name of Person
Observing:_____

Age and gender of child (Do not provide
name)_____

Written Summary of Information Learned from Child:

a. **Child functioning**

b. **Adult functioning**

c. **Parenting**

d. **Discipline**

e. **Information that I didn't learn, and wished I had asked the child:**

Assessment of Child Interviewing Skills
Based on feedback from the person who observed me and my own self-assessment, these are the child interviewing skills that:

I am beginning to be proficient with:

I will need much practice with:

This concludes the Child Interviewing Lab. When we reconvene for the last lab for CORE, we will debrief our child interviewing field activities. We will then return to adult interviewing skills to discuss the approach to learning about all of the domains, including maltreatment.

Sources:

Walker, Anne Graffam (2013) *Handbook on Questioning Children, A Linguistic Perspective*, 3rd Edition. American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, 2013.

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Brown, R. (1973) *A first language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fivush, R., & Shukat, J. (1995) *Content, Consistency and Coherency of Early Autobiographical Recall.* In M Zaragoza, J. Graham, G. Hall, R. Hirschman, & Y. Ben-Porath (eds.), Memory and Testimony in the Child Witness, pp. 5-23. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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