

Monitoring & Feedback for Forensic Interviewing

Dr. Sonja Brubacher

Meredith Kirkland-Burke

Agenda

1. A Nationwide Survey of Child Interviewing Practices in Canada
2. What does the research tell us about maintaining and improving forensic interviewing skill?
3. Types of feedback
4. Peer review @ BOOST CYAC
5. Case
6. Next steps and action plan

The research tells
us....

Study # 1

- 21 trained forensic interviewers
- 96 interviews done 6 months before training matched and compared to 96 interviews done after the training
- Transcripts were used to code for question types and tabulate the number of forensically relevant details produced by the child during the substantive part of the interviews (higher quality interviews would have more open ended questions with details provided by the children in response to those prompts)
- 21 interviewers were in one of the four following training conditions

Lamb et. al, 2000

1

Week long classroom training (child development but no protocol described)

2

2 day training in use of structuring interview and using open ended questions

4

Trained on a structured protocol and participated in monthly group feedback meetings

#3

2 day training including structured protocol, simulated interviews. Following 2 day, interviewers received individual written and verbal feedback on interviews, and participated in monthly group feedback meetings focused on adherence to protocol and necessary adaptations based on cases.

Findings

- greatest compliance with protocol and highest quality forensic interviews found in 3rd and 4th training group that had:
 - Training to follow a specific forensic interviewing protocol AND
 - Monthly day long workshops (continuous training)
 - No significant difference between interviewers who participated in ongoing monthly workshops versus those who participated in the monthly workshops AND were given individual feedback on most of their interviews.

Study # 2 : 8 forensic interviewers Lamb et. al, 2002

37 interviews with supervision /
feedback



37 interviews after supervision /
feedback



Lamb et al., 2002

- Findings:
 - After supervision / feedback ended:
 - significant decline in use of open ended questions
 - option posing and suggestive prompts increased
 - option posing and suggestive prompts introduced earlier in interview

“The results reported here suggest that, in the absence of the ongoing supervision and opportunities to reexamine their interviews closely, investigators tended to fall back on older, less desirable and less effective techniques.....continued discussion and problem solving within groups of investigators might have helped interviewers maintain superior interview practices, providing a less costly but effective means of maintaining the quality of investigative interviews.”

Lamb et. al, 2002

Study # 3

- 13 interviewers
- 2 day workshop - child development and interviewing techniques
- Interviewers submitted interviews every other week and received written and verbal feedback (for 8 months)
- 2 months after first workshop – refresher training provided
- Findings:
 - Interviews contained more open ended questions and fewer closed questions following the refresher training
- Conclusions: Spaced learning may assist interviewers in maintaining interviewing skills

Rischke, Roberts, Price, 2011

Study # 4

- 19 law students interviewed children ages 5 – 10, 1x week for 10 weeks
- One hour self and one hour peer reviews weekly with review of transcript and video
- All interviewers improved based on decreased option posing questions (31%) and increased open ended invitations (47%)
- Improvement was incremental and occurred over time

Stolzenberg, Lyon, 2015

Talking with kids

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkfcPQ2IaQ>
- 0 - 2:42

Our natural inclinations....

- **Police interviewing children tend to ask ‘largely inappropriate’ questions which could lead to wrongful convictions: study**
- [Douglas Quan, npquickwire](#) | May 6, 2014 6:43 PM ET, National Post
 - 45 interviews from a Canadian police service
 - Children ages 3 – 17 years
 - Investigating – sex. Assault, assault, internet luring, exhibitionism, voyerurism
 - Disclosure in 93%
 - Officers trained on PEACE model for interviewing adults

Our natural inclinations....

- Findings:
 - Open – ended – 7%
 - Directive – 31%
 - Closed / focused – 39%
 - Leading / suggestive – 4%
 - Other (summary, multiple 19%)
 - 40% of central details from child provided after open ended questions asked.

Errors in forensic interviews

- Predominant question type is directive or closed
 - Narrative Event Practice (practice interview) not utilized
- Young children asked when events occur and how many times
- Child transitioned to the substantive phase when not engaged



Types of feedback for forensic interviews

Forensic interviewing models for CAC's

- Designated forensic interviewer
 - small group of highly trained individuals conduct interviews on behalf of investigators
 - typically do not complete other parts of investigations
- Generalist forensic interviewer
 - larger group of interviewers (typically child welfare and police) who conduct forensic interviews on behalf of their CAC and also involved in other aspects of the investigation (officer in charge, Intake worker)
- Hybrid forensic interviewer
 - a combination of the designated and generalist approach

Supervision

- One on one interaction between a more experienced forensic interviewer and a newly or less trained/experienced forensic interviewer
- may or may not include an assessment of the interviewer's performance for quality assurance purposes



Supervision

Pro's

- can tailor feedback to meet specific learning needs
- more helpful for newer interviewers who may benefit from more feedback initially
- can monitor whether feedback is implemented in practice
- confidentiality for interviewer is easier to maintain

Con's

- strain on human resources
- if tied to performance – less honesty and engagement possibly by interviewer

Consultation

- one on one interaction where an individual with specialized knowledge / skills provides expert advice and feedback to assist the interviewer in improving and developing their skill
- not typically tied to performance evaluation / appraisal
- consultant often not part of organization

Consultation

Pro's

- not tied to performance so increased engagement as consultant typically external to interviewer's organization
- tailored to individual needs of interviewer
- no risk for interviewer related to vulnerability with colleagues
- easier to ensure confidentiality

Con's

- cannot monitor if feedback is implemented in practice
- costly

Self Review

- On one's own, taking a look at one's [development](#) and progress to determine if a situation has improved and what area may need [improvement](#)

Self Review

Pro's

- limited strain on human resources
- easy to implement – no meetings or coordination among professionals

Con's

- questionable objectivity / neutrality
- no built in time into work day
- limited accountability to change practice

Peer Review Sheet

Put √ for more than one word response to that question type.

Put X for one word response to that question type.

Put O for "I don't know" or no response to that question type.

| | |
|--|--|
| Open Questions/ Invitations | |
| "Wh" Questions/ Specific | |
| Closed Questions (Yes/No and Multiple Choice) | |

INTERVIEW COMPONENTS PEER REVIEW FORM 1.5

Interviewer Name _____ Reviewer Name _____ Date _____

INTERVIEW COMPONENTS

COMMENTS

Check off each component as it is covered.

| YES | NO | N/A | STAGE ONE COMPONENTS |
|-----|----|-----|--|
| | | | Introduce self and role |
| | | | Gather information |
| | | | Check below Truth-Lie |
| | | | Interviewer explain |
| | | | Child demonstrates understanding |
| | | | Child agrees to tell the truth |
| | | | Check below Rules |
| | | | Don't know (explain) |
| | | | Don't know (demonstrate) |
| | | | Don't understand (explain) |
| | | | Don't understand (demonstrate) |
| | | | Correct me (explain) |
| | | | Correct me (demonstrate) |
| | | | Help me understand (explain) |
| | | | Other rules (specify in comments section) |
| | | | Developmental screening |
| | | | Invite narrative about neutral topic |
| YES | NO | N/A | STAGE TWO COMPONENTS |
| | | | Appropriately timed transition to topic of concern |
| | | | Non-leading transition to topic of concern |
| | | | Invite free narrative about topic of concern |
| | | | Seek specific details about topic of concern |
| | | | Corroborative questioning about topic of concern |
| | | | Consistent 'Hourglass' Questioning |
| | | | Explore multiple hypotheses |
| YES | NO | N/A | STAGE THREE COMPONENTS |
| | | | Do safety planning |
| | | | Invite child's questions |
| | | | Ask about any other concerns |
| | | | Introduce neutral topic |
| | | | Explain what's next |
| | | | Thank child appropriately |
| | | | Avoid cultural insensitivity throughout interview |

*Use the free space provided in the right margin next to the table to **comment** about components omitted or shortened because of developmental level of child. Rules and Truth-Lie are often adapted or omitted for preschoolers, and developmental screening adapted or omitted for children aged 7 and older.*

Peer review

- Facilitated discussion with other interviewers or team members intended to maintain and increase desirable practices in forensic interviewing
- Process of critically appraising one's practice with peers
- Formalized process
- Neutral environment
- Established group norms
- Shared understanding of goals, processes and purpose.

Peer Review

Pro's

- hear other perspectives
- observe different interviewing styles / approaches
- assist in preparing for other reviews such as testifying in court
- not tied to performance so perhaps increased engagement

Con's

- vulnerability with peers as peer reviewer and reviewee
- not tailored to individual training or learning needs
- limited monitoring to determine if feedback translates into changes in practice
- discomfort watching oneself on video (cringe factor)



Forensic interviewing peer review

Toronto / BOOST CYAC

Timeline

- February 2013
 - police / CAS staff received initial training through NCAC (3 days)
- **October 2013**
 - **CYAC opened**
- December 2013 -
 - proposed model for peer review provided to management and reviewed by small group of supervisors / staff and then proposed to joint management team for approval
- October 2014 –
 - Peer review process introduced to police and child welfare staff
- November / December 2014
 - 2 pilot peer review sessions
- **February 2015 to present – monthly peer review**

Guiding principles

- There is no such thing as the perfect forensic interview and you are not being held to an unrealistic standard.
- Try to have an open mind and listen / hear the guidance you will receive. It will not compromise your cases.
- You do not have to defend why you did things in the past, the reasons are very likely good ones, but the guidance will expand your options and skill set.
- Interviewing victims is one of the most challenging parts of an investigation.
- Feedback should include overall impressions of the interview, recommendations for improvement and then highlight interviewer strengths.
- Protect your colleague's right to confidentiality and avoid discussion of peer review outside of peer review sessions.

Case selection

- at interviewer's discretion
- a challenging case where feedback would be helpful
- highlights a challenge often encountered by forensic interviewers so could be of assistance for other interviewers when confronted with similar challenges

Peer review process

- Officer or worker provides a brief case history
- Officer or worker raises questions for group (areas where they would like some feedback ie. other strategies to manage reluctance, transition to the substantive)
- Video recording started and both presenting officer / worker or facilitator stops video recording at various times in the interview and asks.....

What would you ask / do next?

Over the last three years.....

- Have completed 35 peer review sessions from February 2015 – February 2018

Themes

- managing reluctance in forensic interviews
- soliciting disclosure related to emotional harm
- adapting interview approach for 12 year old with ASD
- separating multiple incidents
- debating when questioning is exhausted
- use of interview aids (diagrams etc.)
- how much context is important to collect
- approach when concerns raised by sexual behaviour or contact with sexual offender versus a disclosure

Themes (cont.)

- should we incorporate sexual abuse prevention into our forensic interviews
- routine use of sexual exploitation screen
- is there such a thing as over rapport building
- suggestions for following up after children have provided an immediate disclosure at the very outset of the interview – return to protocol vs. encourage disclosure
- how to conduct effective joint forensic interviews (between police and CAS)
- responding to fantastical statements in interviews
- use of interpreters in forensic interviews
- adaptations for preschoolers
- interview approach following a recantation

Lessons learned

- Group size 12 – 15 (safety in numbers)
- Stop and start of DVD – reduces attention on the interviewer – we're all in this together – you will find yourself in that situation one day – what will you do.
- Check list / written feedback not utilized
- Assignment well in advance for peer review session with follow up before to ensure DVD is available (volunteer approach challenging)
- Committed facilitator / leader
- Schedule early in the day
- Develop strategy for staff turnover

Next Steps?