Developing a Peer Review Process for Forensic Interviewers

National CAC/CYAC Training Program

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Will discuss….

- What does research tell us that forensic interviewers require to maintain and improve forensic interviewing skill?

- What options are available for forensic interviewers to maintain and improve interviewing skills following initial training?

- How did the peer review process for forensic interviewers develop at Toronto CYAC? What does it look like now and lessons learned?

- What are other communities offering to forensic interviewers for maintaining and improving skill following initial training?

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

" Thirty years of empirical research on interviewing of children brings us close to consensus on basic child forensic-interview strategies. "

Saywitz, Lyon, Goodman, 2017

Initial training programs

- APSAC Child Forensic Interview Clinic (NICHD)
- NCAC Forensic Interviewing of Children (Advanced, Extended, at Trial)
- Tom Lyon 10 Step (on line)
- CCAC - ONLINE Advanced Practice in Forensic Interviewing of Children (14 modules, spaced learning)
- Provincially based training programs for forensic interviewing
- Community based training programs for forensic interviewing

After training….

How do I maintain my skills and continue to develop as a forensic interviewer?

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 3 rd and 4 th 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."
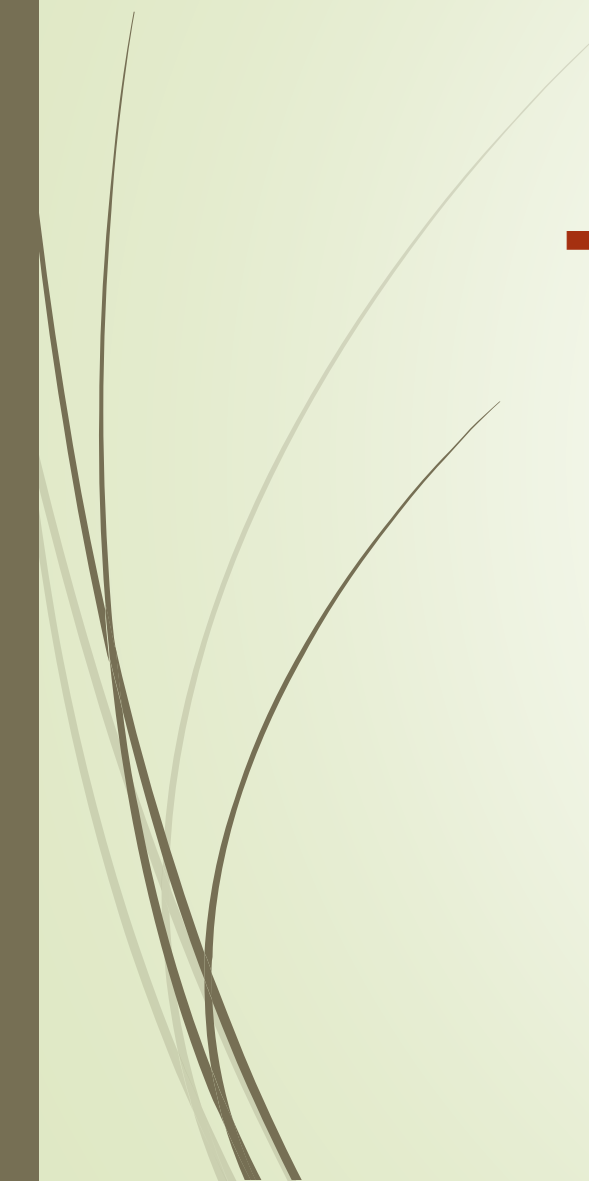
Lamb et. al, 2002

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, voyeurism

  - 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.

- *"Research examining typical investigative interviews found that many of the most suggestive techniques are uncommon in forensic interviews…..Rather, the primary problem with most interviews is that they only contain predominantly closed-ended questions, which are not highly leading, but elicit less complete and less accurate reports."*

Lyon, 2014

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

Trained in a structured protocol **+** Ongoing and continuous feedback **=** Higher quality forensic interviewing

Standards for Accredited Members
Revised Effective – 2017

NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
ALLIANCE®

F. Individuals who conduct forensic interviews at the CAC must participate in a structured peer review process for forensic interviewers a minimum of 2 times per year, as a matter of quality assurance. Peer review includes participants and facilitators who are trained to conduct child forensic interviews and serves to reinforce the methodology(ies) utilized and provide support and problem-solving regarding shared challenges. Structured peer review includes:
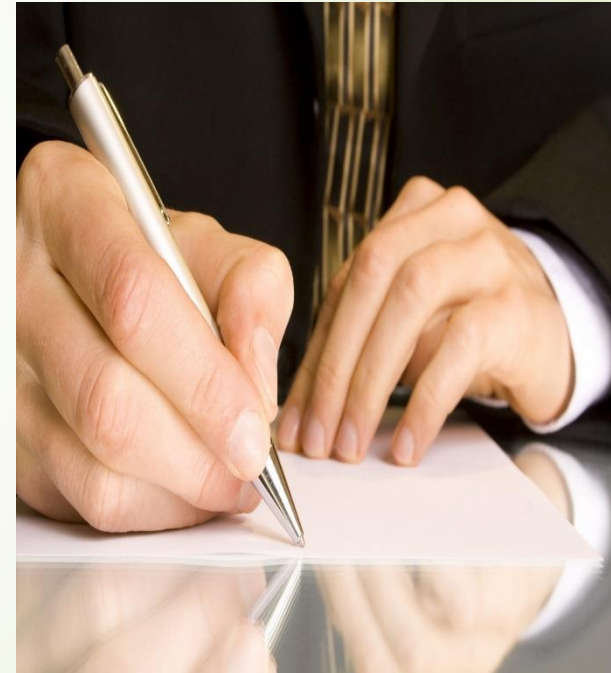
a. Ongoing opportunities to network with, and share learning and challenges with peers,
b. Review and performance feedback of actual interviews in a professional and confidential setting,
c. Discussion of current relevant research articles and materials,
d. Training opportunities specific to forensic interviewing of children and the CAC-specific methodologies.

STATEMENT OF INTENT: Participation in peer review is vitally important to assure that forensic interviewers remain current and further develop and strengthen their skills based on new research and developments in the field that impact the quality of their interviews. Peer review is a complement, not a substitute, for supervision, case review and case planning.

Types of feedback for forensic interviews

Documentation of forensic interviews

Supervision

- One on one interaction between a more experienced forensic interviewer and a newly or less trained/experienced forensic interviewer

- may or may nor 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 <u>development</u> and progress to determine if a situation has improved and what area may need <u>improvement</u>

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 _____
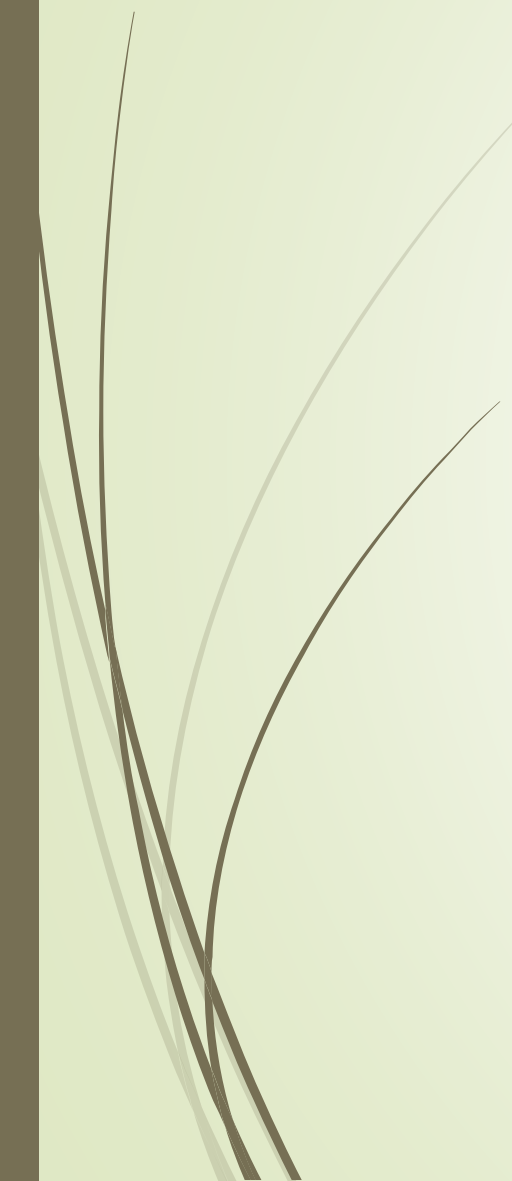
		INTERVIEW COMPONENTS		COMMENTS

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 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
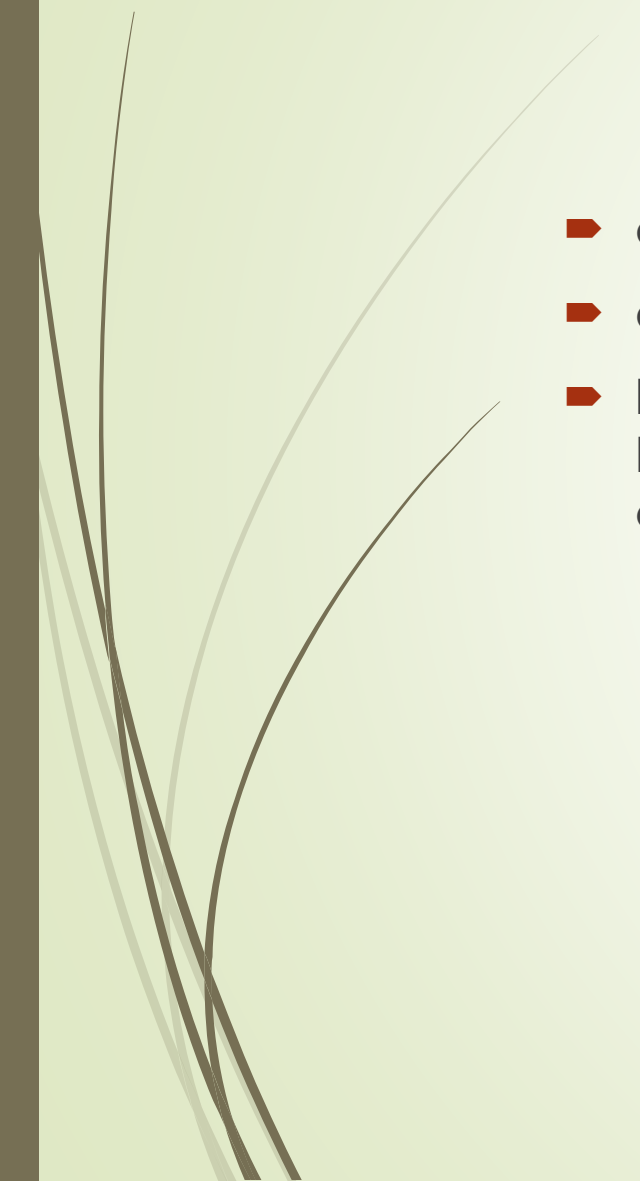- February 2015 to present – monthly peer review

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

Consent to use video recording of interviews for peer review

- a separate consent form was developed to obtain informed consent from parents and youth to use video recordings for peer review

- verbal consent obtained over telephone and then documented in writing was also determined to be an acceptable way of obtaining informed consent

BOOST

CHILD & YOUTH ADVOCACY CENTRE

CONSENT TO SHARE VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDINGS FOR FORENSIC INTERVIEW PEER REVIEW

The Child & Youth Advocacy Centre is committed to ongoing learning and improvement in practice. Staff from Toronto Police Service, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto and the Hospital for Sick Children participate in peer reviews to learn from one another. This involves viewing selected video/audio recordings of interviews, so feedback can be received from a group of colleagues. We are requesting your consent to use the recorded interview with you or your child for this purpose.

I have read and understood this consent. I _____,
_{name of youth, parent or guardian}

parent/guardian of _____, hereby consent to the
_{name of youth, child}

interview of _____ conducted by a member of
_{name of youth, child}

_____, on or about _____ to be used for
_{police, child protection agency}   _{date of interview}

forensic interview peer review.

_____   _____
Signature of Youth, Parent/Guardian   Print name of Youth, Parent/Guardian

_____   _____
Witness   Print name of witness

Script to review with families to obtain consent

- CYAC staff have received training for interviewing children / youth according to best practice guidelines and research.

- In order to maintain high standards regarding interviewing skills however, ongoing and continuous review of actual interviews beyond initial training is recommended to maintain and improve skills.

- At the CYAC, this review process occurs among approximately 12 to 15 staff members where a video recording of an interview is reviewed and feedback from staff provide ongoing learning opportunities.

Group size and composition

- police and child welfare workers mixed together in groups

- started with approximately 6 staff per group with four groups total, each assigned a supervisor.

- 6 months into peer review, collapsed the four groups to two with approximately 15 staff and 2 supervisors per group.

- attendance improved with larger groups (safety in numbers?)

- supervisors present to participate in providing feedback versus supervision model and performance appraisal

Frequency of peer review

- each peer review team meets every other month

- a given officer or worker attends 6 peer reviews a year

- officers and workers are invited to attend the off month as well if they have an interest in doing so

Documentation

- Facilitator records the following information and **keeps separate from file**:
    - Date of peer review
    - Staff in attendance
    - Name of officer or worker providing video recording
    - Age of child in interview being reviewed
    - Very brief un-identifying case history
    - Comments and feedback provided by group
    - Themes based on feedback
    - Correspondence that was provided to the group (Position papers, research articles etc.)
- Forensic Interview Peer Review Feedback form distributed but not utilized

Forensic Interview Peer Review Feedback

Interviewer Name: _____

Age of Child: _____

Date of Peer Review: _____

PHASES OF INTERVIEW	
Introduction – role, documentation, observers	
Ground Rules – don't guess, don't understand, correct interviewer, uninformed interviewer, truth/lie	
Rapport Building/Practice Narratives – reliance on open ended questions	
Transition to Substantive	
Substantive – separation of incidents and clarification / follow up questions	
Closure	
PROMPTS / QUESTIONS TYPES	
Use of open ended questions	
Use of "wh" questions	
Overall demeanour, pace, interaction with child	

Additional comments for the interviewer:

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 two years…..

- Have completed 24 peer review sessions from February 2015 – February 2017

- 5 sessions cancelled due to low numbers for attendance or presenting officer / worker unavailable

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
- Strategy for staff turnover

Canada
Political Regions

N

Yukon Territory
Whitehorse

Northwest Territories
Yellowknife

Nunavut

Iqaluit

Newfoundland and Labrador

St. John's

British Columbia

Alberta
Edmonton

Saskatchewan
Regina

Manitoba

Ontario

Quebec

Prince Edward Island
(Charlottetown)

Halifax

Victoria

Winnipeg

Quebec City

Nova Scotia

New Brunswick
(Fredericton)

Ottawa

Toronto

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