Ongoing Supervision, Continued Training, and Peer Review of Child Forensic Interviewers

A Bibliography

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National Children’s Advocacy Center

210 Pratt Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35801
256-533-(KIDS) 5437 • nationalcac.org

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Scope

This bibliography provides citations and abstracts of publications covering issues related to ongoing supervision, continued training, and peer review with child forensic interviewers. Included are English language research publications, law reviews, and reports.

Organization

Publications are listed in date-descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible.

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We provided immediate and detailed feedback in a training paradigm in which simulated interviews with computer generated avatars were used to improve interviewers’ questioning style. Fifty-nine untrained student/interviewers conducted eight interviews each and were randomly assigned to a control, feedback or feedback and reflection group. Compared to the control group, the groups receiving feedback used a higher percentage of recommended questions and retrieved more relevant details while using a lower percentage of not recommended questions and retrieved less wrong details. Only the groups that received feedback reached a reliable change in the proportion of recommended questions. The reflection intervention proposed in the present study did not enhance training effects above and beyond feedback in the present sample. The present study replicated previous findings regarding the role of feedback in improving the quality of investigative interviews, however, failing to show an effect of reflection. Further studies on different reflection tasks are suggested. Copyright © 2017 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.


Children in Scotland who are subject to child protection interviews should be interviewed jointly by specially trained police officers and social workers who have attended training based on a national curriculum. This study, which was conducted in two Strands, explores the effectiveness of the training, focusing specifically on the free narrative phase of the interview. Strand A explores respondents’ self-evaluation, obtained through semi-structured interviews with 16 participants, while Strand B comprises an analysis of 21 role-play interviews. The findings show a considerable discrepancy between perceived practitioner confidence in ability and actual skill levels observed in role-plays, where interviewers showed a persistent overuse of specific and closed questions,
while neglecting the use of open prompts and open questions to encourage free narrative. The study concludes that the national curriculum is not as effective in preparing participants for the free narrative phase of the interview as perceived by participants. Possible reasons are explored. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.


The present study examined whether a training model that focuses on consistent exposure to protocol procedure, self-evaluation, and intensive peer-review sessions could improve interviewers’ ability to adhere to best practices. Law students (N=419) interviewed 5- to 10-year-old children on a weekly basis as part of a semester-long forensic child interviewing class. They transcribed their interviews, and participated in 1-hr self- and peer-reviews. The proportion of each question type was calculated (option-posing, Wh- questions [what, how, where, why, when, and who], and open-invitations) within each interview for each interviewer. Across 10 weeks of interviews, interviewers consistently improved their performance, decreasing the proportion of option-posing questions by 31% and increasing the proportion of open-invitations by 47%. All interviewers improved. The present study suggests that with consistent self-evaluation and peer review, forensic interviewers can incrementally improve their performance.


Medical evaluations for suspected child sexual abuse carry a significant medico-legal burden and are often performed in a variety of clinical settings, by clinicians with different levels of expertise and experience. Peer review or professional practice evaluation is an important component for quality assurance. We surveyed 255 programmes which provided sexual abuse evaluations which were identified through queries with national child abuse professional organisations. We sought information on team composition and setting, patient population characteristics and each site's peer review process. Of the 129 responding programmes, 42 per cent (n = 44) reported having a written peer review process. There were no differences between practice types with regards to having a written peer review process, the percentage of cases reviewed, the documentation type reviewed
or the percentage reporting an external review process. The majority of programmes (n = 89, 85%) reported that they review both chart and photo documentation during the peer review process. Our data support that most programmes involved in child maltreatment evaluations undergo some form of peer review, but there exists a large amount of heterogeneity in the process by which it occurs.


This evaluation focused on the developing interviewing skills of 104 active crime investigators in Sweden who participated in six different half-year courses between 2007 and 2010. The courses emphasised a combined model of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Protocol and the PEACE model of investigative interviewing. The teaching was interdisciplinary. The evaluation involved interviews of 208 children, most of whom were suspected victims of physical abuse. The investigators used two-thirds fewer option-posing questions and three times as many invitations after training as they did before training. These data show that the training was very effective in shaping the interviewers’ behaviour into better compliance with internationally recognised guidelines.


In the present study, we assessed the effectiveness of an extensive training and feedback program with investigative interviewers of child victims of alleged abuse and neglect in a large Canadian city. Twelve investigative interviewers participated in a joint training initiative that lasted 8 months and involved classroom components and extensive weekly verbal and written feedback. Interviewers were significantly more likely to use open-ended prompts and elicited more information from children with open-ended prompts following training. These differences were especially prominent following a subsequent “refresher” training session. No negative effects of training were observed. Clear evidence was found of the benefits of an intensive training and feedback program across a wide variety of investigative interviews with children. Although
previous research has found benefits of training with interviewers of child sexual assault victims, the current study extends these findings to a wide range of allegations and maltreatment contexts.


‘Best-practice’ guidelines for conducting investigative interviews with children are well established in the literature, yet few investigative interviewers actually adhere to such guidelines in the field. One of the problems is that little discussion has focused on how such guidelines are learned and sustained by professionals. To address this concern, the current article reviews the key elements of interview training programs that are known to promote competent interviewing. These elements include: (i) the establishment of key principles or beliefs that underpin effective interviewing, (ii) the adoption of an interview framework that maximises narrative detail, (iii) clear instruction in relation to the application of the interview framework, (iv) effective ongoing practice, (v) expert feedback and (vi) regular evaluation of interviewer performance. A description and justification of each element is provided, followed by broad recommendations regarding how these elements can be implemented by police and human service organisations in a cost-effective manner.


This study compared the effectiveness of two types of instructor feedback (relative to no feedback) on investigative interviewers’ ability to adhere to open-ended questions in simulated practice interviews about child abuse. In one condition, feedback was provided at the end of each practice interview. In the other, the instructor stopped the interviewer at various stages during the practice interviews to provide feedback. The relative effect of these conditions was examined by measuring interviewers’ performance in a standardized mock interview paradigm immediately prior to,
immediately after, and 12 weeks after the practice and feedback sessions. Prior to and 12 weeks after the practice sessions were administered, there was no significant difference in participants’ adherence to open-ended questions irrespective of the nature of the feedback, or whether feedback was received. At the immediate post-practice assessment interval, however, the participants who received feedback during the practice interviews performed better (\(M\) proportion of open-ended questions = .85, \(SD = .13\)) than the other participants (post-interview feedback \(M = .67, SD = .18, p < .001\); no feedback \(M = .56, SD = .16, p < .001\)). This heightened use of open-ended questions was associated with a greater tendency among the interviewees to provide abuse-related details in response to open-ended questions (\(M = .91, SD = .11\)) compared to the other participants (post-interview feedback \(M = .77, SD = .15, p < .05\); no feedback \(M = .69, SD = .16, p = .001\)). Different types of feedback can be differentially effective in training child abuse investigators to adhere to open-ended questions. The benefits of any training program, however, are likely to be short-lived without ongoing practice.


Thirty-seven 4- to 12-year-old alleged victims of sexual abuse were interviewed using the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development investigative interview guide by 8 experienced forensic investigators who received regular supervision, including timely feedback on their ongoing interviews. These interviews were matched and compared with 37 interviews conducted by the same investigators immediately following termination of the supervision and feedback phase. After the supervision ended, interviewers used fewer open-ended prompts and thus elicited less information from recall, instead relying more heavily on option-posing and suggestive prompts, which are less likely to elicit accurate information. These results suggest that ongoing supervision and feedback may be necessary to maintain desirable interview practices.

Four distinct strategies were employed to train 21 experienced forensic interviewers to interview alleged sex abuse victims (M=9.20 years of age) in accordance with professionally recommended practices. The structure and informativeness of the 96 interviews they conducted following training were compared with the structure and informativeness of 96 matched interviews conducted by the same interviewers in the 6 months prior to the training. Didactic workshops and instruction in the utilization of highly structured presubstantive interview procedures had little effect on the number of open-ended prompts used to elicit information or on the amount of substantive information elicited in this way. By contrast, intensive training in the use of a highly structured interview protocol, followed by continuing supervision in the form of monthly day-long seminars, supplemented in some cases by detailed individual feedback on recent interviews, yielded dramatic improvements on these measures of interview quality.


Evaluated the effect of a 1-wk intensive training course on police and social worker forensic interviewing with children (mean age 6.2 yrs) and investigated the actual types of questions employed by interviewers. Analysis of 19 videotaped interviews was used to compare trained and untrained interviewers on a series of rating scales designed to assess interviewer performance. The number of requests for free reports and the number of open, specific, leading, and nonleading questions used were obtained. No differences were found in performance between trained and untrained interviewers on any rated behaviors with both trained and untrained interviewers rating poorly. Specific and leading questions were found to occupy over half the total number of questions used by both sets of interviewers, and few free report requests were used. That is,
interviewers mostly asked the types of questions least likely to obtain valid and reliable information from children, with no evident variation from this pattern within the trained group. It is concluded that these findings suggest that interviewers use inappropriate questioning strategies to obtain information even after training and rely heavily on specific rather than open questioning. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)


Twenty-seven experienced interviewers attended a 10-day training institute designed to provide knowledge and skills for improving investigative interviews with young children. Participants completed pre- and posttraining surveys assessing their knowledge of the scientific evidence regarding memory, suggestibility, and other aspects of children's ability to provide accurate accounts of events during interviews. They also conducted pre- and posttraining interviews with preschool children about 2 previously experienced events. Participants' knowledge about children's abilities and the scientific basis of various interviewing protocols increased significantly after the training. However, training did not have a significant impact on interviewers' questioning styles or the amount of accurate information elicited from the children. Results indicate that successfully translating knowledge into practice requires multiple opportunities for skill practice and feedback.