

# Child Forensic Interview Training

*A Bibliography*



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## **Scope**

This bibliography provides citations and abstracts to publications on numerous topics related to issues in child forensic interview training. International publications are included.

## **Organization**

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

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# Child Forensic Interview Training

## A Bibliography

Cyr, M., Dion, J., Gendron, A., Powell, M., & Brubacher, S. (2021). [A test of three refresher modalities on child forensic interviewer po-training performance](https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000300). Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000300>

This study aims to advance the field of child forensic interviewing by assessing the impact of different refresher training modalities on police officers' abilities to adhere to the steps of an interview protocol and on the types of questions used. Previously trained police officers (N = 46) were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: (1) supervision with an expert, (2) peer group supervision, and (3) computer-assisted exercises on children's investigative interview techniques. Comparison of interviews conducted before (n = 136) and after (n = 124) the refresher modalities revealed an improvement in performance across time for almost all steps of the protocol. There were more effects associated with time than with modality of refresher training with regard to question types used during episodic memory training and the substantive phase of the interview. Although there were some differences between the three conditions, no method emerged as clearly superior. Results suggest that all modalities could be useful in refreshing adherence to the steps of an interview protocol and use of best practice questioning approaches. The discussion highlights that the time devoted to the three modalities was likely not enough and that further studies are needed to determine the most optimal delivery of refresher training. (PsycInfo Database Record © 2021 APA, all rights reserved)

Haginoya, S., Yamamoto, S., & Santtila, P. (2021). The combination of feedback and modeling in online simulation training of child sexual abuse interviews improves interview quality in clinical psychologists. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105013>

Previous research has shown the effectiveness of simulation training using avatars paired with feedback in improving child sexual abuse interview quality. However, it has room for improvement. The present study aimed to determine if the combination of two interventions, feedback and modeling, would further improve interview quality compared to either intervention alone. Thirty-two clinical psychologists were randomly assigned to a feedback, modeling, or the combination of feedback and modeling group. The participants conducted five simulated child

sexual abuse interviews online while receiving the intervention(s) corresponding to their allocated group. Feedback was provided after each interview and consisted of the outcome of the alleged cases and comments on the quality of the questions asked in the interviews. Modeling was provided after the 1st interview and consisted of learning points and videos illustrating good and bad questioning methods. The proportion of recommended questions improved over the five interviews when considering all groups combined. The combined intervention (vs. feedback alone) showed a higher proportion of recommended questions from the 2nd interview onward while the difference between the combined intervention and modeling alone and the difference between the modeling alone and feedback alone were mostly not significant. The number of correct details were affected in the same way. No significant differences in the number of incorrect details were found. The results show that the combination of feedback and modeling achieves improvement greater than that of feedback alone.

Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., Blasbalg, U., & Karni-Visel, Y. (2021). [The dynamics of two-session interviews with suspected victims of abuse who are reluctant to make allegations.](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420001820) *Development and Psychopathology*, *33*, 739-747.  
[https://doi:10.1017/S0954579420001820](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420001820)

Supportive forensic interviews conducted in accordance with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Revised Protocol (RP) help many alleged victims describe abusive experiences. When children remain reluctant to make allegations, the RP guides interviewers to (a) focus on rapport building and nonsuggestive support in a first interview, and (b) plan a second interview to allow continued rapport building before exploring for possible abuse. We explored the dynamics of such two-session RP interviews. Of 204 children who remained reluctant in an initial interview, we focused on 104 who made allegations when re-interviewed a few days later. A structural equation model revealed that interviewer support during the first session predicted children's cooperation during the rapport-building phase of the second session, which, in turn, predicted more spontaneous allegations, which were associated with the interviewers' enhanced use of open-ended questions. Together, these factors mediated the effects of support on children's free recall of forensically important information. This highlighted the importance of emphasizing rapport with reluctant children, confirming that some children may need more time to build rapport even with supportive interviewers.

Lawrie, M., Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., & Boud, D. (2020). Forensic interviewers' perceptions of the utility of mock interviews with trained actors as a training tool for child interviewing. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 106*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104553>

The use of mock interviews (also known as role play), particularly using trained actors as interviewees, has demonstrated positive effects on communication training but little is known about how learners engage with these practice activities. The current study was conducted to determine what perceptions forensic interviewers hold about mock interviews as a learning exercise for developing skills for child interviewing, and whether there are negative perceptions that could potentially have an impact on the helpfulness of the exercise. Participants: Written reflections were obtained from 35 US forensic interviewing professionals who were enrolled in an online child interviewer training program. Common themes were extracted from the reflections to establish forensic interviewers' perceptions of aspects of the mock interview. Extraction of themes assisted in the determination of whether perceptions impacted the manner and degree to which interviewers engaged in the mock interview process. Results suggest that regardless of potential anxiety, learners experience multiple benefits from the mock interview. Findings from the present study suggest most trainees perceive mock interviews favourably, and they are useful in child interview training programs.

Lawrie, M., Brubacher, S. P., Earhart, B., Powell, M. B., Steele, L. C., & Boud, D. (2021). Testing the effectiveness of a blended vulnerable witness training for forensic interviewers. *Journal of Family Trauma, Child Custody & Child Development, 1-19*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26904586.2021.1894303>

The current study tested the effectiveness of a compact (18 hour) and blended (involving online and face-to-face components) training course, adapted from a previously evaluated course found to be successful in fostering long-term change in interviewing skill. The compact course was developed by trimming the previous course to only include learning activities that empirically demonstrated improvement of interviewing skills. There were 41 US forensic interviewers, with prior training experience, who took part in the research. Their interviewing habits were assessed using standardized mock interviews immediately prior to, and at the conclusion of training. A subset were assessed 9-24 months later. Results demonstrated that, despite reductions in length and content, training was effective in the short term and the subset maintained trained behaviors

up to 24 months after completion. Results suggest that adjustments to training can be effective if the training remains founded on principles of human learning.

Pompedda, F., Palu, A., Kask, K., Schiff, K., Soveri, A., Antfolk, J., & Santtila, P. (2020). Transfer of simulated interview training effects into interviews with children exposed to a mock event. *Nordic Psychology*, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2020.1788417>

Research on students suggests that repeated feedback in simulated investigative interviews with avatars (computerized children) improves the quality of the interviews conducted in this simulated environment. It remains unclear whether also professional groups (psychologists) benefit from the training and if the effects obtained in the simulated interviews transfer into interviews with real children who have witnessed a mock event. We trained 40 psychologists (Study I) and 69 psychology students (Study II). In both studies, half of the participants received no feedback (control group) while the other half received feedback (experimental group) on their performance during repeated interviews with avatars. Each participant then interviewed two 4-6-year-old children who had each witnessed a different mock event without any feedback being provided. In both studies, interview quality improved in the feedback (vs. control) group during the training session with avatars. The analyses of transfer effects showed that, compared to controls, interview quality was better in the experimental group. More recommended questions were used in both studies, and more correct details were elicited from the children in Study I, during the interviews each participant conducted with two children (N = 76 in Study I; N = 116 in Study II) one week after the training. Although the two studies did not show statistically significant training effects for all investigated variables, we conclude that interview quality can be improved using avatar training and that there is transfer into actual interviews with children at least in the use of recommended questions.

Blasbalg, U., Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., Karni-Visel, Y., & Ahern, E. C. (2019). Is interviewer support associated with the reduced reluctance and enhanced informativeness of alleged child abuse victims?. *Law and Human Behavior*, 43(2), 156-165. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000303>

Child maltreatment victims are often reluctant to report abuse when formally interviewed. Evidence-based guidelines like the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Standard Investigative Interview Protocol do not adequately address such reluctance because they are focused on cognitive rather than socioemotional strategies. The present study was designed to determine whether the Revised National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Protocol, which emphasizes supportive interviewing more than the standard protocol does, might predict increases in the overall informativeness and reductions in the reluctance of alleged victims. A total of 254 interviews, 166 using the revised protocol and 88 using the standard protocol, were conducted with 4.06- to 13.98-year-old children ( $M = 9.20$ ,  $SD = 2.49$ ) who disclosed multiple incidents of physical abuse by their parents and were thus expected to be more reluctant than victims of extrafamilial abuse. We coded indices of interviewer support and question types, children's reluctance, and informativeness in each utterance during the substantive phases of the interviews. The Revised Protocol was associated with better interviewer support and questioning as well as reduced reluctance and increased informativeness on the part of the children. These findings document the value of training interviewers to attend to the socioemotional needs of suspected abuse victims during investigative interviews. (PsycInfo Database Record © 2020 APA, all rights reserved)

Farrugia, L., Oxburgh, G., & Gabbert, F. (2019). [Effective evaluation of forensic interviews: The Forensic Interview Trace \(FIT\)©](#). *Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice*, 10(1), 20-31.

Forensic interviewing forms an integral part of a police/law enforcement officer's main duties and responsibilities. However, not every interviewer possesses suitable interview skills to be able to complete this effectively and despite the introduction of the PEACE model of interviewing, with the last 'E' focusing specifically on 'Evaluation', this stage of the interview model rarely gets the attention it deserves. This is concerning given the need for forensic interviews to be ethical, productive and admissible. The Forensic Interview Trace (FIT)© is a recently developed tool designed to record all aspects of a forensic interview including questioning, interviewee responses and interview/interviewee characteristics. The development of this tool is considered within the context of a forensic interview and in comparison to similar empirical testing and validation, it is anticipated that the FIT© will assist with the effective evaluations of forensic interviews in order to ensure compliance with relevant guidance and legislation, as well as ensuring that effective interview skills pertain to best practice.

Brubacher, S. P., Roberts, K., Cooper, B., Price, H., Barry, L., & Vanderloon, M. (2018). [A nationwide survey of child interviewing practices in Canada](#). *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 60(1), 34-68. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.2017-0008>

The goal of the present study was to create professional awareness about the degree of consensus and consistency in the interview techniques that ultimately influence child victims' experiences and progression through the legal system in Canada. We surveyed 200 professionals who interview children in Canada about the guidelines and techniques they use, their perceptions of their training and interviewing arrangements, and the needs and challenges they face in daily practice. Results revealed a wide variety of practices in use across the country, and differences in length of training and who provided it. Police and child protection workers tended to differ on their satisfaction with interviewing arrangements. Commonalities were observed across organizations and locales in that most interviewers could readily identify challenges in talking to vulnerable witnesses and desires for additional training (e.g., greater topic breadth and regular follow-ups). Responses revealed awareness of contemporary research, as well as pockets of more traditional thinking, about child witness capabilities and interviewing techniques. Although variety in interviewing guidelines and training providers is not necessarily problematic, the development of a single nationwide policy on the core components of vulnerable witness interviewing, to which training programs must adhere, could have particular value.

Pompedda, F. (2018). [Training in investigative interviews of children: Serious gaming paired with feedback improves interview quality](#). Göteborg University.

Interview quality (i.e., adherence to best practice) in alleged child sexual abuse (CSA) cases remains low. Training programs have been developed in order to tackle this problem. However, these programs are usually not successful in creating stable effects over time, or when positive results have been achieved, programs are often logistically complicated and expensive in addition to requiring a lot of time from those participating. The general aim of the present thesis was to create and test an interview simulation tool (EIT®). This tool was used to train interviewers to use more recommended questions through multiple practice occasions in combination with the administration of detailed, immediate and continuous feedback, but without excessive time and cost burden. We thus applied a serious gaming approach in which trainee-interviewed computer-generated avatars equipped with response algorithms and predefined memories to explore the

feasibility of this approach to train interviewers in alleged CSA cases. In all the studies presented in the present thesis, we operationalized interview quality as recommended and not recommended questions asked, relevant, neutral and wrong details elicited from the avatars or children and correct conclusions reached concerning what had happened to the avatars or children. In Study I, we showed how interviews with avatars combined with feedback improved the quality of simulated investigative interviews in a group of students compared to a group of students that conducted the interviews without feedback. We also showed that knowledge regarding evidence-based principles relating to CSA investigations did not influence the quality of interviews. Here, we used a combination of outcome (i.e. information regarding the conclusion of the story) and process (i.e. information regarding the question types used) feedback simultaneously. In Study II, we separated between the two types of feedback and showed that the combination of feedback enhanced training effects to a higher degree compared to the process and outcome feedback provided alone. For example, a combination of feedback elicited medium/strong effects ( $d_{ppc2} = 0.76$ ) in improving the percentage of recommended questions in only four interviews. In Study III, we used a new set of algorithms to relate interviewer questions to avatar responses. In the previous studies, the algorithms were mechanical (i.e., after a certain number of recommended questions an operator provided a detail). Starting from Study III, we used probabilistic algorithms that related interviewer questions to avatar responses probabilistically (in both cases the probabilities themselves were derived from research on child memory and suggestibility). In Study III, we also tested if a simple reflection task enhances training effects. The reflection task did not enhance training effects compared to the group that received a combination of the two previously used feedback types. This study replicated previous results regarding the effect of avatar interviews combined with feedback on interview quality. For example, 90% of participants in the two groups that received feedback improved their use of 10 recommended questions, and 38% reached a reliable change in their use of recommended questions in only two hours. In Study IV, we showed that the improvements in interview quality achieved in student samples in Studies I-III were also achieved in a group of psychologists. The second and most important result of Study IV was that the improvements achieved during the training also transferred into interviews with actual children who had witnessed a mock event. During these interviews, that occurred one week after the training, the feedback group asked 40% of recommended questions compared to the control group who reached 26%. The results of training were analyzed using a mega-analytic approach in the

present thesis combining the results of the individual studies. The results showed how simulated interviews with avatars and the provision of a combination of outcome and process feedback improved in a robust manner the quality of simulated investigative interviews compared to a control group. Overall, the results provide support for the use of a serious gaming approach to training interviewers. Previous research clearly shows how important it is to interview the child in the most neutral way possible when there is suspicion of abuse. Because of this, providing interviewers with a new, interactive and efficient tool together with providing police departments or training institutions with a realistically applicable, time-and-cost efficient training protocol can change the way we plan and organize training in this context.

Hsu, C. W., & Teoh, Y. S. (2017). Investigating event memory in children with autism spectrum disorder: Effects of a computer-mediated interview. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 47(2), 359-372. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-2959-2>

The present study aimed to examine the effects of a novel avatar interviewing aid during memory interviews with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Thirty children were recruited for our study (Age: M = 7.60, SD = 0.68), half with ASD (13 boys; 2 girls) and the other half being neurotypical (13 boys; 2 girls). Children participated in a target event and were subsequently interviewed a week later by either an avatar interviewer or a human. The participants were also asked six misleading questions aimed to examine their suggestibility. Bayesian analysis showed some increase in memory performance for both groups of children interviewed by the avatar interviewer, and this effect exacerbated for children with ASD. These results showed encouraging implications for future applications.

Krause, N., Pompedda, F., Antfolk, J., Zappalá, A., & Santtila, P. (2017). [The effects of feedback and reflection on the questioning style of untrained interviewers in simulated child sexual abuse interviews](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/acp.3316). *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 31(2), 187-198. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/acp.3316>

Due to a lack of eyewitnesses and corroborating evidence, investigative interviews with alleged victims are of central importance in child sexual abuse (CSA) investigation. In almost 70% of cases, the child's statement is the only evidence to rely on in court (Elliott & Briere, 1994; Herman, 2009). As international research has shown, interview quality remains quite poor worldwide (Cederborg, Orbach, Sternberg, & Lamb, 2000; Korkman, Santtila, Westeråker & Sandnabba,

2008b; Sternberg, Lamb, Davies, & Westcott, 2001). For example, a Joint Inspectorate report in England and Wales (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2014) described a ‘widespread tendency to also pose specific closed questions throughout the interview, which tended to elicit shorter and less detailed responses’ (p. 22) and ‘the use of leading questions was common where a more open style of questioning would have been appropriate’ (p. 23), showing the continued need for training. Training programs, even if some promising results have been reported (Benson & Powell, 2015; Cederborg, Alm, Lima da Silva Nises, & Lamb, 2013; Yi, Jo, & Lamb, 2015), have generally failed in creating and maintaining improvements in the quality of these interviews. For example, a Norwegian follow up (Johnson et al., 2015) showed no improvement in interview quality over a time span of 22 years, in spite of considerable investment in training. The most promising research has shown that, together with a structured protocol, feedback on questions used must be provided in an immediate, continuous and detailed way (Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin and Mitchell, 2002a; Smith, 2008). This is a problem for a number of reasons: CSA interviewers rarely get feedback on their use of question types outside of scientific studies. Organizing this type of training can result in high costs and logistical problems. Also, in most real CSA cases, it cannot be reliably known whether a child’s statement, or parts of it, are actually true (Vrij, 2005), resulting in a lack of feedback on the conclusions drawn by the interviewers.

Pompedda, F., Antfolk, J., Zappalà, A., & Santtila, P. (2017). [A combination of outcome and process feedback enhances performance in simulations of child sexual abuse interviews using avatars](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01474). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1474. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01474>

Simulated interviews in alleged child sexual abuse (CSA) cases with computer-generated avatars paired with feedback improve interview quality. In the current study, we aimed to understand better the effect of different types of feedback in this context. Feedback was divided into feedback regarding conclusions about what happened to the avatar (outcome feedback) and feedback regarding the appropriateness of question-types used by the interviewer (process feedback). Forty-eight participants each interviewed four different avatars. Participants were divided into four groups (no feedback, outcome feedback, process feedback, and a combination of both feedback types). Compared to the control group, interview quality was generally improved in all the feedback groups on all outcome variables included. Combined feedback produced the strongest effect on increasing recommended questions and correct conclusions. For relevant and neutral

details elicited by the interviewers, no statistically significant differences were found between feedback types. For wrong details, the combination of feedback produced the strongest effect, but this did not differ from the other two feedback groups. Nevertheless, process feedback produced a better result compared to outcome feedback. The present study replicated previous findings regarding the effect of feedback in improving interview quality, and provided new knowledge on feedback characteristics that maximize training effects. A combination of process and outcome feedback showed the strongest effect in enhancing training in simulated CSA interviews. Further research is, however, needed.

Rivard, J. R., & Schreiber Compo, N. (2017). [Self-reported current practices in child forensic interviewing: Training, tools, and pre-interview preparation](https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2290). *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 35(3), 253-268. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2290>

In child sexual abuse investigations, forensic interviewers within the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) model serve as neutral fact-finders for a team of professionals tasked with investigating and intervening in cases of alleged child sexual abuse. Although empirical evidence has led to the development of best-practice techniques and protocols, there is currently no universally adopted protocol in the field. The present research gathered detailed information from a national sample of real-world child forensic interviewers about their training and current practices, with a specific focus on assessing the information interviewers typically review prior to conducting child forensic interviews. Most notably, the survey revealed a lack of uniformity in interviewing protocols adopted and pre-interview preparation practices. Although rare, some interviewers reported using an allegation-blind interviewing approach, highlighting the need for future research on this and other under-studied techniques. Copyright © 2017 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Duron, J. F., & Cheung, M. (2016). Impact of repeated questioning on interviewers: Learning from a forensic interview training project. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 25(4), 347-362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2016.1161687>

Forensic interviewers have a difficult job with high risk for career burnout and secondary trauma. Few studies have addressed how new forensic interviewers or trainees experience repeated questioning and multiple interviews. This study simulated the process of training new forensic interviewers through the creation of two interview videos in which social work graduate students participated as actors portraying the roles of interviewer and child. These films served as

instructional aids preparing graduate social work students for professional child welfare roles while promoting research-based approaches to interviewing children about sexual abuse allegations. Qualitative data from two cohorts of student actors were collected to analyze interviewers' perspectives on repeated questioning and interviews in child sexual abuse cases. Two themes were extracted from the subjects' experiences: "It is emotionally taxing" and "Navigating the interviewer role is unexpectedly complex." Exposure to repeated questions and multiple interviews affected the performance and confidence of the interviewers.

Lamb, M. E. (2016). Difficulties translating research on forensic interview practices to practitioners: Finding water, leading horses, but can we get them to drink?. *American Psychologist*, 71(8), 710-718. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000039>

Over the last three decades, researchers have elucidated the cognitive and motivational conditions that affect the capacity and willingness of young alleged victims to describe their experiences to forensic interviewers. Applied researchers have also studied the contents and features of training programs designed to help interviewers take advantage of the research on developmentally appropriate interviewing. The latter studies have highlighted a knowledge transfer problem—scientists understand best-practice techniques well, many interviewers believe that they both understand and employ those practices, but widespread training has had a limited impact on the actual quality of interviews conducted in the field. There is now clear evidence that improvements in interviewing practice occur reliably only when training courses involve multiple modules, distributed over time, with repeated opportunities for interviewers to consolidate learning and to obtain feedback on the quality of the interviews they do conduct. Barriers to the implementation of such training are discussed.

Benson, M. S., & Powell, M. B. (2015). Evaluation of a comprehensive interactive training system for investigative interviewers of children. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 21(3), 309-322. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000052>

This article reports on the evaluation of an interactive interviewer training system with a large, heterogeneous sample of investigative interviewers of children. The system, delivered predominantly through computer-assisted learning activities, focused on how to elicit important evidential details from child witnesses in a narrative format. Two studies are reported, each

adopting a pre-versus posttraining design. Study 1 examined the effect of the training on trainees' (N = 92) performance, using mock interviews where an actor played the role of the child in a highly controlled manner. Study 2 examined the effect of the training on field interviews (N = 156) conducted prior to and after the training. Five measures were analyzed: (a) proportion of interviewer question types, (b) proportion of desirable interviewer behaviors, (c) adherence to the interview protocol, (d) interview length, and (e) the quality of evidential information sought. Overall, the findings provide clear support for the utility of the training system. Irrespective of the type of interview or measure, adherence to best-practice interviewing increased from pre- to posttraining, with some evidence supporting sustained performance 12 months after there had been no intervening training or supervision. The implication is that there is now an evidence-based alternative to the traditional classroom-based training system for investigative interviewers. Suggestions for future research are also discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2016 APA, all rights reserved)

Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M., Skouteris, H., & Guadagno, B. (2015). The effects of e-simulation interview training on teachers' use of open-ended questions. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 43, 95-103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.02.004>

Teachers in many parts of the world are mandated reporters of child abuse and maltreatment but very little is known concerning how they question children in suspicious circumstances. Teachers (n = 36), who had previously participated in a mock interview scenario designed to characterize their baseline use of various question-types when attempting to elicit sensitive information from children, were given online training in choosing effective questions. They engaged in simulated interviews with a virtual avatar several times in one week and then participated in a mock interview scenario. The amount and proportion of open-ended questions they used increased dramatically after training. The overall number of questions, and amount and proportions of specific and leading questions decreased. In particular, large decreases were observed in more risky yes-no and other forced-choice questions. Given that most teachers may feel the need to ask a child about an ambiguous situation at some point during their careers it is worthwhile to incorporate practice asking effective questions into their training, and the present research suggests that an e-learning format is effective. Additionally, effective questions encourage the development of narrative competence, and we discuss how teachers might include open-ended questions during regular classroom learning.

Johnson, M., Magnussen, S., Thoresen, C., Lønnum, K., Burrell, L. V., & Melinder, A. (2015). Best practice recommendations still fail to result in action: A national 10-year follow-up study of investigative interviews in CSA cases. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 29*(5), 661-668. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3147>

The present study examined a national sample of Norwegian investigative interviews in alleged child sexual abuse cases (N = 224) across a 10-year period (2002–2012), in order to decide whether practice had improved over the decade in terms of the types of questions asked. The results indicate that the frequency of open-ended, directive, option-posing, and suggestive questions asked was unchanged during the 10-year period, but that the frequency of repeated questions had increased significantly. When analyzed together with the results from a previous study of interview practice covering the period of 1990–2002, long-term trends were found to be similarly stable, with no change in the frequency of open-ended and suggestive questions asked over a 22-year perspective. However, a decreasing frequency of option-posing questions observed accompanied by an increasing frequency of directive questions may be considered a positive trend. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Köpsén, S., & Nyström, S. (2015). The practice of supervision for professional learning: the example of future forensic specialists. *Studies in Continuing Education, 37*(1), 30-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2014.967343>

Supervision intended to support learning is of great interest in professional knowledge development. No single definition governs the implementation and enactment of supervision because of different conditions, intentions, and pedagogical approaches. Uncertainty exists at a time when knowledge and methods are undergoing constant development. This situation affects professions with high demands on precision and safety, and thus supervision and learning. The aim of this article is to explore the practice of supervision for learning professional knowledge of forensic specialists. The context is the Swedish National Laboratory of Forensic Science internal training program, which focuses on learning in daily work when the forensic trainee is assigned a supervisor. Ethnographic studies of supervisors and trainees in different forensic specialties were conducted. Practice theory is used to understand how supervision is planned and implemented to support professional development. Findings show that supervision by seasoned professional forensic specialists is significant for trainee learning. However, supervision is arranged, and performed differently, indicating various conditions for learning. Furthermore, the material set-

ups of the professional practice prefigure the practice of supervision. Supervision is an area of expertise that needs to be cultivated and learned to maintain highly specialized professional knowledge in current time of change and uncertainty.

La Rooy, D., Brubacher, S. P., Aromäki-Stratos, A., Cyr, M., Hershkowitz, I., Korkman, J., ... & Stewart, H. (2015). [The NICHD protocol: A review of an internationally-used evidence-based tool for training child forensic interviewers](https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRPP-01-2015-0001). *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*, 1(2), 76-89. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRPP-01-2015-0001>

This article reviews an evidence-based tool for training child forensic interviewers called the NICHD Protocol, and the relevant research on: children's memory development; communication; suggestibility; the importance of open-prompts, and challenges associated with interview training. We include international contributions from experienced trainers, practitioners, and scientists, who are already using the Protocol or whose national or regional procedures have been directly influenced by the NICHD Protocol research (Canada, Finland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, and United States). Throughout the review, these experts comment on: how and when the Protocol was adopted in their country; who uses it; challenges to implementation and translation; training procedures; and other pertinent aspects. We aim to further promote good interviewing practice by sharing the experiences of these experts. The NICHD Protocol can be easily incorporated into existing training programs worldwide and is available for free. It was originally developed in English and Hebrew and is available in several other languages at [nichdprotocol.com](http://nichdprotocol.com).

Pompedda, F., Zappalà, A., & Santtila, P. (2015). Simulations of child sexual abuse interviews using avatars paired with feedback improves interview quality. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 21(1), 28-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2014.915323>

We tested whether simulated child sexual abuse (CSA) interviews with computer-generated child avatars could improve interview quality. Feedback was provided not only on question types, as in previous research, but also on whether the conclusions drawn by the interviewers were correct. Twenty-one psychology students (average age  $M = 24.5$ ) interviewed four different avatars which had a simulated story of either abuse or non-abuse. The participants were randomly divided into two groups: one received feedback on question types and conclusions after each simulated interview and the other one did not receive any feedback. Avatars revealed pre-defined 'memories'

as a function of algorithms formulated based on previous empirical research on children's suggestibility. The feedback group used more open-ended and fewer closed questions. They also made more correct conclusions and found more correct details in the last two interviews compared to the no-feedback group. Feedback on both the question types and conclusions in simulated CSA interviews with avatars can improve the quality of investigative interviews in only one hour. The implications for training practice were discussed.

Cederborg, A. C., Alm, C., Lima da Silva Nises, D., & Lamb, M. E. (2013). Investigative interviewing of alleged child abuse victims: An evaluation of a new training programme for investigative interviewers. *Police Practice and Research, 14*(3), 242-254.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2012.712292>

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.

Price, H. L., & Roberts, K. P. (2011). The effects of an intensive training and feedback program on police and social workers' investigative interviews of children. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 43*(3), 235-244.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022541>

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 eight 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.

Powell, M. B., Hughes-Scholes, C. H., Cavezza, C., & Stoové, M. A. (2010). Examination of the stability and consistency of investigative interviewer performance across similar mock interview contexts. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 15*(2), 243-260.  
<https://doi.org/10.1348/135532509X472077>

Three studies examined the degree to which investigative interviewers' adherence to best-practice guidelines is consistent across similar mock interviews. In each study, two interviews were administered within a period of several hours. Further, group and individual stability of interviewer performance was analysed, and performance was measured by calculating the proportion of open-ended and leading questions as well as the presence of predetermined problem behaviours. The studies varied depending on the type of interview paradigm employed. Interviewer performance in Study 1 was measured in a group context where participants rotated between the role of interviewer, child respondent, and observer. In Study 2, an adult played the role of a child recalling abuse but this occurred in isolation (participants did not observe others or play the child). Study 3 was similar to Study 2 except that in each interview an unfamiliar child aged 5–7 years recalled an innocuous event. Interviewer performance was relatively stable across tasks, although the strength of the relationship between measures varied across analyses. Improvement in open-ended question usage occurred in Study 1 but not Studies 2 and 3. Irrespective of the assessment context, the dichotomous rating scale yielded greater consistency than when questions were tallied. Further, group stability overestimated individual stability. The practical implications of these findings for trainers and researchers are discussed.

Cederborg, A. C., & Lamb, M. E. (2008). The need for systematic and intensive training of forensic interviewers. In T. I. Richardson & M. V. Williams (Eds.), *Child abuse and violence* (pp. 1-17). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

Powell, M. B. (2008). [Designing effective training programs for investigative interviewers of children](https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2008.12035804). *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 20(2), 189-208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2008.12035804>

'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.

Powell, M. B., Fisher, R. P., & Hughes-Scholes, C. H. (2008). The effect of intra-versus post-interview feedback during simulated practice interviews about child abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32(2), 213-227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.08.002>

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. A single study compared the relative 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. This research is relevant to trainers of investigative interviewers because there is currently large variability in the type of feedback employed in training programs. This study is one of the first to empirically demonstrate that different types of feedback may be differentially effective in improving the performance of investigative interviewers.

Westcott, H. L., & Kynan, S. (2006). Interviewer practice in investigative interviews for suspected child sexual abuse. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 12(4), 367-382.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10683160500036962>

The aim of the research was to analyse interviewer practice in investigative interviews, concentrating on features other than the type of questions asked. Transcripts of 70 videotaped Memorandum interviews from England and Wales were coded using a specifically developed scheme. Children were aged from under 7 to 12 years. Aspects of interviewer practice that were recorded included implementation of the different phases of the interview, interviewer distortions, and other problematic interviewer behaviours, e.g. excessive familiarity, inappropriate disbelief, etc. A number of problems were noted in the transcripts. Rapport, closure and free narrative phases varied in the degree to which they were present, and in their quality even when included. Discussions of truth and lies in the rapport phase were at a basic level that did not include intention to deceive. Over half the sample included interviewer distortions, and other instances of problematic behaviours were also noted. The results of the study support and extend earlier research, and suggest a number of areas requiring attention. The importance of interviewer training is highlighted, and further discussion is required as to why such training does not appear to be implemented in practice.

Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Orbach, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Horowitz, D., & Esplin, P. W. (2002). The effects of intensive training and ongoing supervision on the quality of investigative interviews with alleged sex abuse victims. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(3), 114-125. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0603\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0603_2)

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.

Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P. W., & Mitchell, S. (2002). Is ongoing feedback necessary to maintain the quality of investigative interviews with allegedly abused children?. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(1), 35-41. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0601\\_04](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0601_04)

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.

Powell, M. B. (2002). Specialist training in investigative and evidential interviewing: Is it having any effect on the behaviour of professionals in the field?. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 9(1), 44-55. <https://doi.org/10.1375/pplt.2002.9.1.44>

While numerous concerns have been voiced over the past decade regarding the inappropriate question styles of investigative and evidential interviewers, there has been relatively little research, discussion, and critique in relation to the content, structure, and efficacy of existing interviewer training courses. This article provides a brief up-to-date summary of the essential elements of an investigative or evidential interview, followed by a review of research relating to the effectiveness of training programs for forensic interviewers and the factors that are needed to promote the use of appropriate questioning techniques. Finally, this article offers recommendations for future research and for the revision of existing training programs in forensic interviewing.

Aldridge, J., & Cameron, S. (1999). Interviewing child witnesses: Questioning techniques. *Applied Developmental Science*, 3(2), 136-147. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0302\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0302_7)

The last decade has seen major developments in the legal arena concerning the evidential interviewing of children. Research evidence clarifying the ability of children to provide valid and reliable information has been incorporated into the development of evidential interviewing techniques. This in turn has focused attention on the importance of training. Despite the increase in training, research with both child and adult interviewers has shown that inappropriate questioning strategies and poorly structured interviews still typify a significant number of investigations. This study evaluated the effect of a 1-week intensive training course on police and social worker forensic interviewing with children and investigated the actual types of questions employed by interviewers. Analysis of videoed 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. The study found no differences 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. These findings echo the results of other studies in suggesting that interviewers use inappropriate questioning strategies to obtain information even after training and rely heavily on specific rather than open questioning. The results of this study suggest that the frequently adopted model of the short, intensive training course may not be the most effective way of training investigators to interview children, and more research is needed to establish the best way forward.

Warren, A. R., Woodall, C. E., Thomas, M., Nunno, M., Keeney, J. M., Larson, S. M., & Stadfeld, J. A. (1999). Assessing the effectiveness of a training program for interviewing child witnesses. *Applied Developmental Science*, 3(2), 128-135.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0302\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0302_6)

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.