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

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

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Brubacher, S. P., Shulman, E. P., Bearman, M. J., & Powell, M. B. (2021). Teaching child investigative interviewing skills: Long-term retention requires cumulative training. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law.* https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000332

Successful interview training includes components beyond content learning (e.g., coding question types, practicing skills in simulated interviews), but the advantages conferred by adding components are unclear. The present research evaluated best practice questioning and behavior following the addition of a series of training components delivered in a logical order. In Study 1, randomly assigned treatment (n = 34) and control (n = 41) participants received an intensive 1-day content lecture. Next, the treatment condition completed workbook exercises (self-paced) followed by small-group practical sessions over 6 weeks. Both conditions were assessed prior to and immediately following the lecture, after the coding exercises, after the small-group sessions, and 9 months posttraining. Improved skill was observed in all participants after the lecture. The treatment condition continued to progress with cumulative training, whereas the control condition leveled off or decreased in skill with time. There was no deterioration for the treatment condition 9 months posttraining. Study 2 replicated the treatment condition from Study 1 except that all training was delivered online (with face-to-face components via videochat) and learners (n = 12) differed from Study 1 participants in their profession, country of employment, and recruitment. Study 2 results indicated that the training program could be delivered completely online with the same positive outcomes as when the program included in-person components. Overall, results indicated increased learning with the addition of components and showed that, when initial learning is intensive, skill is maintained. (PsycInfo Database Record © 2021 APA, all rights reserved)

Cyr, M., Dion, J., Gendron, A., Powell, M., & Brubacher, S. (2021). A test of three refresher modalities on child forensic interviewers' posttraining performance. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law.* 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.

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 Full text

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.

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

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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. Conclusions: Findings from the present study suggests suggest most trainees perceive mock interviews favourably, and they are useful in child interview training programs.

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. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *31*(2), 187-198. https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3316

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.

Wolfman, M., Brown, D., & Jose, P. (2017). Examining forensic interviewers' perceptions of practice-focused supervision. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 50*(4), 566-581. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004865816655588

Regular supervision influences interviewing quality with child witnesses. It is unclear, however, whether interviewers recognize the importance of supervision, and how often they access it. The present study surveyed 39 New Zealand Specialist Child Witness Interviewers (otherwise known as forensic interviewers), and examined: (a) their access to, and, perceptions of supervision, and

(b) factors that may influence their access to, and, perceptions of supervision. We identified 26 interviewers who received some form of practice-focused supervision. Within this group, there was considerable variability in terms of how often they accessed supervision, and, their ratings of how satisfied they were with their access to, and the content of, supervision. Furthermore, some of those who did participate in supervision felt they did not actually receive specific input about their interviewing. Thus, an important area for investment in promoting good interviewing practice is developing effective approaches to facilitate interviewers engaging in regular practice-focused supervision, perhaps, at least in part, by addressing some of systemic barriers identified (e.g. limited financial support, time constraints, lack of experienced supervisors, lack of understanding/support from managerial staff and geographical isolation).

Wolfman, M., Brown, D., & Jose, P. (2016). Taking stock: Evaluating the conduct of forensic interviews with children in New Zealand. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 22*(6), 581-598. https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2016.1168426

This study examined adherence to the New Zealand Specialist Child Witness Interviewing model in 93 interviews with children about sexual abuse allegations. Interviewers (n = 27) demonstrated good adherence to the scripted components of the model during the preparation stage of the interview. When investigating the abuse allegation, interviewers demonstrated a greater use of Direct ('Wh-') (57%), and Option-posing prompts (20%) than stipulated by the model and fewer broad open-ended prompts (22%). Very few suggestive questions were posed. In contrast to recommended practice, Direct and Option-posing prompts were not only asked frequently, but were introduced very early in the investigative phase of the interview. Training, supervision and feedback should focus on increasing the use of broad open-ended prompts and minimizing premature use of more focused prompts to promote best-practice interviews.

Goetzold, S. (2015). An open and shut case of closed questions: An exploration of joint investigative interview training in Scotland. *Child Abuse Review*, *26*(2), 116-129. https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2391 Full text

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.

Lyon, T. D., & Stolzenberg, S. N. (2015). Repeated self-and peer-review leads to continuous improvement in child interviewing performance. *Journal of Forensic Social Work, 5*(1-3), 20-28. https://doi.org/10.1080/1936928X.2015.1068721
Full text

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 (N¼19) 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.

Greeley, C., Yoon, J., Tran, X., & Giardino, A. (2014). A nationwide survey of peer review practices in child maltreatment teams. *Child Abuse Review*, *25*(3), 230-240. https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2337
Full text

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. Copyright © 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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 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.

Vieth, V. I. (2009). In the shadow of defense counsel: Conducting peer review of forensic interview in an age of discovery. *The Official Newsletter of the National Child Protection Training Center*, *1*(10), 1-6. Full text

Powell, M. B. (2008). Designing effective training programs for investigative interviewers of children. *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.

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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

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.

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

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.

Walker, N. E. (2002). Forensic interviews of children: The components of scientific validity and legal admissibility. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, *65*(1), 149-178. https://doi.org/10.2307/1192369
Full text

Aldridge, J., & Cameron, S. (1999). Interviewing child witnesses: Questioning techniques and the role of training. *Applied Developmental Science*, *3*(2), 136-147. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0302_7

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 © 2016 APA, all rights reserved)

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

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.

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