Interviewing & Engagement Skills for Children
CW 1012
House Keeping

- 1012 Class
  - 3 days
  - Trainers
- Cannot miss more than 30 minutes
- Pre/Post Test
  - Score 80
- Restrooms
- Lunch/breaks
- Phone
- Smoking
- Dress code
Introductions

- Your name and county
- How long have you been in Child Welfare/with OKDHS?
- In what area of CW do you work?
- What is your greatest need while interviewing children?
Agenda

• Day One ~ Why
  – Child Welfare Interviews
  – Developmental Considerations

• Day Two ~ What
  – Direct vs. Indirect
  – Interview Strategy
  – Disclosure /Tools/ Recanting

• Day Three ~ How
  – Opportunity to Practice
  – Peer Review & Feedback
Why do you interview like you do?
What are you trying to accomplish?
Forensic Interviews vs. Child Welfare Interviews

- Purpose
- Focus
- Setting
- Format
- Assistance
- Tools

- Who is interviewed
- Type of Abuse
- Case Responsibility
- Training Required
- Documentation
Get me outta here...I don’t need the details...I am not a Forensic Interviewer!!
Now, wait a minute, I am Permanency Planning—I don't interview children...
Andrea Video
Developmental Considerations for Interviewing Children
Children’s apparent lack of credibility has as much to do with the competence of adults to relate to and communicate with children as it does with children’s abilities to remember and relate their experiences accurately.

• K. Saywitz 1993
Language Differential

Children do not always have the language or words to describe events.

Actions that are not discussed in a family, but known to everyone, can be very difficult for a child to describe if they’ve never heard words to describe the actions.

- **No Words** = No Explanation
- **Few Words** = Simple Explanation
- **Wrong Words** = We hear a lie or incongruence
Communicative Competence

• “the ability to communicate in a non-biased manner at the child’s level of understanding of conversational rules and concepts, accounting for the child’s age, vocabulary and linguistic skill.”

• K. Saywitz 1993
Some research indicates that certain language acquisition features may be retarded by as much as twelve to eighteen months if a child has been abused.

Ann Graffam Walker, 1994
Developmental Considerations to Frame Our Interview

- Characteristics/Qualities
- Language Skills/Development
- Physical Development
- Attachments/Alliances
- Skills to Interview

Generally speaking, what do we know?
Age, Developmental Expectations, Allegation(s)

Specifically, what do we know?
This Child, This Family, This CW History
Pre-school Age (3-5 years)

- Family essential
- Egocentric
- Lack of embarrassment
- Concrete thinkers
- Limited attention span
- Language not fully developed—difficult to understand
- Concepts & experiences, but no words
Pre-school Age (3-5 years)

- Poor source monitoring
- Fantasy/reality blurred
- More suggestible
- Time is poorly understood
- Identifies with parents and imitates them
- Can provide who, what and where
- Requires continual rapport-building
- “Because” is a sufficient answer
Pre-school Age (3-5 years)

• Interview tips
  – Take your time
  – Monitor attention
  – Let them say it their way
  – Use their first name to focus their attention
  – Sensory recall
  – Use Tools, Draw
  – Corroboration is very important—conduct a thorough investigation

• Interview tips
  – Anchor them in reality—go back to the facts when they shift to fantasy
  – Use Names and proper nouns
  – Use simple, concrete questions
  – Adapt guidelines to ability
  – Use “some” instead of “any” in questions
School Age (6-10 years)

- Family central
- Developing memory skills
- Embarrassment or shame about the topic
- Understand body parts and functions
- Understand consequences of telling
- Increased ability with words & sentences
- Target ages for the Guideline of the Interview
School Age (6-10 years)

• Interview tips
  – Take time to learn the child’s language
  – Practice the Guidelines
  – By the time a child is 10 years old he/she is no more suggestible than an adult
  – Play to their strengths
  – Use tools, let them draw and narrate
  – Help them organize complicated events
  – “Help me understand what you just said.”
  – Clarify words & phrases, even if used correctly
  – Work to understand their concerns and address them
Adolescence (11-18 years)

- **Physical Development**
  - The new equipment’s here!
  - Rapid body changes
  - Girls: peak 13-15 years
  - Boys: 16-19 years

- **Sexual Behavior**
  - Full range of sexual behavior/experimentation
  - Preoccupied with sexual issues
  - Sexual orientation issues come to forefront
  - “Am I normal?”
  - “Am I too hairy?”
Adolescence (11-18 years)

• Cognitive Development
  – Brain still under construction
  – Lacks experience & knowledge to consider some or all consequences
  – Thinking becomes more self-conscious, idealistic and critical
  – Rely on emotional decision-making
  – Limited life experience
  – Self-absorbed
Adolescence (11-18 years)

- Identity issues
- Feel misunderstood and oppressed
- Rapid mood changes
- Idealistic about relationships, values
- May not trust adults
- Slang may have more meaning
- Can often communicate like an adult
- Risk taking is part of identity development
Adolescence (11-18 years)

• Interview Tips
  – Be respectful
  – Use the child’s words for everything
  – Give maximum confidentiality
  – Accept and acknowledge feelings
  – Explore health concerns
  – Clarify words & phrases, even when used correctly
  – Ask when you do not understand something
Disclosure

• A child may disclose abuse or neglect at any time, at any place, to any person.

• As a Child Welfare Specialist you need to be prepared to handle that disclosure.
Factors Influencing Disclosure

- Fear of Disbelief
- Fear of Punishment
- Fear of Blame
- Confusion about abuse & abuser
- Probability of Contact with Offender
- Identity of and relationship to Offender
- Deciding to tell, who, when, where
- Response to initial disclosure
Disclosure is a Process
Not an Event

Accidental
• Child does not understand that it is wrong to tell
• Child doesn’t consider the consequences of their disclosure
• Often incomplete or partial statements

Purposeful
• Child is ready to disclose abuse
• Child has found the words to describe abuse
• Child feels safe enough to disclose
• Child is driven by the desire for safety to tell
Disclosure by Age Group

**Young Children**
- Usually accidental
- Disorganized
- Incomplete & brief
- Not chronological
- In their language
- May include fantasy or bizarre elements

**Adolescents**
- Often delayed
- Often intentional
- Fear of disbelief
- Fear of Blame
- Fear of Exposure
- Often preceded by delinquent behaviors
- May use abrasive language or slang
Purposeful Disclosure

Three phases:

• Self Phase
• Confidant Selection-Reaction Phase
• Consequences Phase
  – Gossiping & news networks
  – Changing relationships
  – Institutional responses & afterlife of telling
  – Insider & outsider communities

• K.M. Staller, D. Nelson-Gardell, 2005
Wahoo!! A Protocol!!!

WAIT...WHY DO I NEED A PROTOCOL???
Interview Protocols
Interview Methods

Direct vs. Indirect

• How do you defend your interview??
Continuum of Questions

- Tell me Invitations
- Open-ended Questions
- Focused Questions
- Yes / No Questions
- Multiple Choice Questions
- Leading Questions
- Coercive Questions
What is so bad about leading questions???
5 Questions
Interview Protocol

• Introduction / Explanations / Initial Inquiry

• **Initial Rapport** / Practice Narrative / Developmental Assessment / Guidelines / Demographics

• Areas of Concern

• Summarization / Safety Assessment

• Closure
Guidelines

- I don’t remember
- I don’t know
- I don’t understand
- Correct Interviewer

“I was not there, I do not know what happened”
Guidelines

• Still need to reinforce throughout the interview
• Young children UNDER 7 require “practice”
• Be consistent with guidelines and practice example
Promises vs. Truth/Lie Discussion

Promise to tell the truth:

- Promising to tell the truth increases honesty (Evans and Lee, 2010; Lyon et al., 2008; Lyon & Dorado 2008; Talwar et al., 2002, 2004)

- Truth-Lie understanding does NOT predict honesty (Lyon et al., 2008)
Promises vs. Truth/Lie Discussion

Promise to tell the truth:

- It’s really important that you tell me the truth.
- Do you promise that you **WILL** tell the truth today?
- Only ask truth/lie questions if it is absolutely necessary *(Lyon, 2011)*
Here's a picture. (Points at pig)
What is this?
(When the child responds “pig”)
OK, that's a pig.
This girl (Points to the girl) looks at the pig and says “that’s a fish.”
Did the girl tell the truth?

Assessing the competency of child witnesses: Best practice informed by psychology and law.
(Lyon, 2011)
You think I need tools and guidelines—you are wrong—I am Permanency!
Wait just a minute...all Kids lie!!
Do NOT...

• Assume you know their world
• Respond to rudeness with authority
• Interrogate
• Judge
• Patronize
• Lie
• Interrupt a narrative
• Make Promises
Tools & Aids

TABLET:

• Auto-Save feature upon opening document
• Desktop holds ALL your forms
• Kids can draw on it, plus use/add color!
• Signatures are valid for all paperwork EXCEPT Foster Care/Bridge Contract
• Save documents to U: drive upon docking
Body Parts Diagram

- Interview Aid
- Use after a disclosure
- Several to choose from
- **Do Not Use** if referring for a forensic interview

“The best use of interview aids is to clarify a disclosure that has already been made.”

(Perona, Bottoms & Sorensen, 2006)
Tool & Aids

DRAWING:

– Free drawing
  • Allowing child to draw during the interview (no specific instructions given).

– Directed drawing
  • Asking a child to draw something specific. Typically a self-portrait, family portrait, home or favorite activity.
Interactive Drawing

Mapping a child’s experience

~ You are “guiding a child to areas of concern”
~ Helps children organize details
~ Tying images to people, places, events

Modified from:
Cognitive-Graphic Mapping
by Ann Alquist
Practice Drawing
Fantastic statements were found more often within the “high certainty” cases than in the other cases.

15% of High Certainty v. 1.5% of Lower Certainty

C.J. Dalenberg (1996)
It is your responsibility as the interviewer to adapt your interview to the age and developmental abilities of the child.

You must speak their language!
Recanting: a part of the disclosure process
The child took it back...doesn't that mean it didn't happen???
Reasons for Recantation

- 80% are due to Lack of support by non-offending parent or caregiver!
- Pressure to deny the allegation
- Child’s need to protect the parent/family
- Child’s desire to return home
- Poor intervention & management of the case by professionals
- Fear of testifying/going to court
Six Critical Areas to Assess

1) Extent or Severity of maltreatment
2) Circumstances surrounding maltreatment
3) How Child/ren function on a Daily Basis
4) How Parents discipline
5) How Parents generally parent
6) How Parents function on a Daily Basis

You must understand this Family’s Culture!
WHY

WWWWH
Interview Protocol

• Introduction(s) / Explanations / Initial Inquiry

• Initial Rapport / Practice Narrative / Developmental Assessment / Guidelines / Demographics

• Areas of Concern

• Summarization / Safety Assessment

• Closure
Interview Practicum

- Prepare an interview strategy with the senerio
- Small groups to practice skills
- 5 minutes to talk about strategy
- 15 minute interview
- 10 minutes for feedback
- Will role play a child
- Video tape
Questions

Remember the SURVEY!