

Lightning Strikes

Article Series - Volume 2

"Child Interviewers"

Who Evaluates Them?

by Lawrence W. Daly

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"Child Interviewers: Who Evaluates Them"

by Lawrence W. Daly

Looking at the Lack of a National Protocol and Evaluation System of Child Interviewers

Post event contamination can occur in a variety of ways when a child interviewer interviews a child about alleged abuse. The majority of the research that has been conducted to date, has addressed the issues surrounding a child's memory, child interviewer's suggestive leading child interview methods and techniques, memory strategy, storage and retrieval. Additionally research has touched upon environmental influences that effect children's testimony. However, there has been a lack of research in the area of how the lack of protocols, guidelines, policies and procedures may contribute to post event contamination.

The research that was obtained in the writing of this article suggests that there is a hap hazard approach by the professionals who are given the responsibility to interviewing alleged child victims of abuse. This is supported by the lack of and/or minimal protocols and guidelines found throughout private and public agencies and organizations. It is our opinion that post event contamination is facilitated through the current inept system and if a national standard for child interviewing was developed, implemented, followed the evaluation protocol, enforced by the professionals who are interviewing children, post event contamination would be reduced. Moreover, it is our opinion that adopting a national standard for interviewing children would bring some credibility and validity to a system, where ethical questions have become to common place about the child interviewers.

Since the beginning of the "child advocate" movement, there has been a lot of emphasis on the need to believe children who allege that they have been abused. The majority of studies and seminars that were given during the past two decades dealt with recognizing abuse and "how to do" the right thing for the child when child abuse is alleged.

The missing ingredient to this fast moving field and the specific focus of this article is to discuss the lack of

evaluation procedures of individuals who are conducting child abuse interviews and investigations.

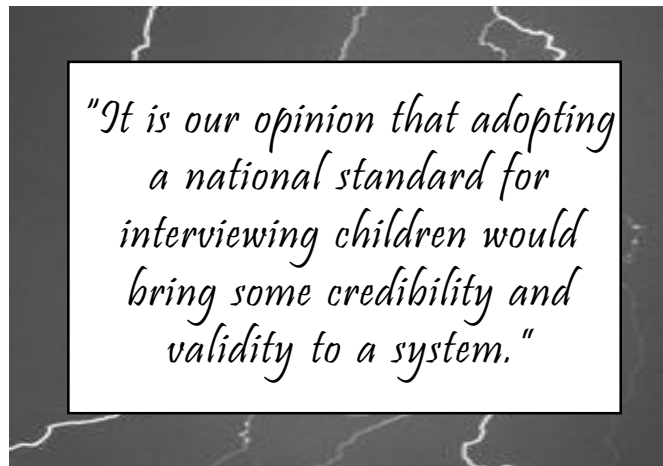
So, who evaluates the interviewer? Are standards, protocols, procedures and guidelines created for child abuse interviewers, but never followed by the individuals and organizations that created them? Are child interviewers the major cause for false allegations and the reason a lot of allegations are put into question? Why isn't there a national standard, protocol, procedure and/or guideline for conducting interviews? Why aren't there procedures for evaluating child interviewers? Does the lack of national standards, protocols, procedures and/or guidelines for conducting interviews influence directly or indirectly to post event contamination?

Does the lack of national standards, protocols, procedures and/or guidelines for conducting interviews influence directly or indirectly to post event contamination?

Protocols and Procedures

During the past two years I have been conducting interviews of police officers, mental health professionals and child interview specialists. Generally, the common traits, details and facts that come out during interviews with these professionals are the following:

1. There are generally no policies, protocols or guidelines established by most police departments, mental health professionals, child protective service agencies and/or prosecutor's office on how to interview children and/or investigate child abuse allegations.
2. The interview method and techniques utilized by the child interviewers generally vary from police officer, police agency, caseworker, child protective agency, and mental health professional.
3. Child interviewers rely heavily on one day to one week seminars that allegedly stress child interviewing and investigative techniques.



4. The rooms that the child interviews are conducted in are generally put together by the child interviewer. There is no rhyme or reason to what and why things are put into the room by the architect.

5. The child interviewers state they do not video-audio/tape record because it is not policy and they believe it violates children's rights. This policy generally exists verbally. Written policy and procedures for child interviewing video-audio/taping are generally nonexistent.

6. Interview props, i.e., anatomical dolls, toy houses, stuffed animals, anatomical drawings are generally introduced prior to conducting a free narrative and/or open questioning type interviews. The interviewer fails to establish a proper rapport and free narrative environment, and relies heavily on the interview prop as a substitution for effective child interview techniques and methods.

7. The child interviewers generally summarize the content of the child interviews of the alleged child victim. The child interviewer when asked about their note taking methods, techniques and accuracy and the manner the questions were asked of the alleged child victim, are generally incapable of providing verbatim interviews.

8. The child interviewers generally conduct the interview with the child alone. When a child interviewer is asked why a defense child interviewer should be subjected to more than the child in the interview room, the general response by the child interviewer is for the protection of the child. The child interviewer generally can not justify his/her belief system. Only that the defense child interviewer is on the other side. When asked why there are different standards for the individual child interviewers, the child interviewer has great difficulty in providing appropriate and reasonable responses.

9. The child interviewers do not prepare prior to the interview with the child. The information the child interviewer receives about the alleged abuse, is generally from an advocate for the child. The child interviewer generally assumes that the information, i.e. history about the alleged abuse is accurate. When asked about the validity and accuracy of the history, about the alleged abuse, the child interviewer generally responds, "It is not my job to question the history!" This attitude creates an expectation that the alleged child victim

will disclose the area allegedly touched, the name of the alleged perpetrator and provide a reliable and valid disclosure of the allegations.

10. The child may be interviewed many times by many child interviewers. Generally the child interviewer interviews the child once and the child interviewer provides a decision about the child's credibility. Generally the child interviewer substantiates the alleged abuse from the alleged history and the alleged child victim's statement.

11. If the child is interviewed by the alleged child advocate interviewer more than once, it is generally viewed by most State professionals as exploring, resolving specific and general issues and determining if the alleged child victim was abused. If the defense child interviewer requests more than one interview or conducts multiple interviews of the alleged child victim, he/she is seen as being a "traumatizer" to the alleged child victim.

12. The child interviewer generally obtains basic interviewing skills either from books, lectures, exposure to observing some child interviews and other resources. The child interviewer once he/she begins interviewing children is generally never evaluated. From time to time, the interview methodology of the child interviewer may be questioned by an investigator or attorney, but nothing happens to stop the child interviewer from continually utilizing his/her interview methods of children.

13. There are no local, state or national child interview certification processes and/or evaluation processes.

14. History questions about the alleged abuse are not properly prepared by the child interviewer.

15. The prosecutors generally make a filing/charging decision on child interviews that usually last approximately ten to fifteen minutes in length. These interviews generally are lacking in content and context about the alleged abuse.

16. Child interviewers are not held accountable for their child interview method and techniques. There are no local, state or national enforcement agencies which keep them in line.

17. The majority of child interviewers I have observed interviewing children are impatient with the child during the interviewing process. This creates an interview process where the child is

not allowed to provide a response to the question and/or is unable to provide a free narrative response.

Initial Approaches to the Allegation

The child interviewers have been practicing medicine without a license. The current evaluation system if in place is based generally on assumptions that the procedures the child interviewers are using are correct. When asked who created the system they are currently using, the general response is "I don't know!" When asked who evaluates them, they generally respond, "a supervisor!" This supervisor is generally someone who was hired by his/her agency to do the child interviews, received the same basic subjective training and followed procedures that they did not question as well.

The interviewing protocols do vary from city to city and state to state. Let us look at two systems I work in on a daily basis:

In Snohomish County, the police agencies use child interview specialists to interview children. The child is brought to the interview room generally by the non-abuser but alleged first receiver of the disclosure of the alleged abuse. This person is usually the child's mother. The child interview specialists may be told subjective unsupported history about the abuse, by the non-abuser. Then the child is interviewed. The interview taking anywhere from ten minutes to one hour, depending upon the age of the child and the child's attention span. The police generally conduct no or minimal collateral interviews. In fact their procedure allows them to hand out statements to be filled out and completed by the witnesses. A method that is very antiquated. The prosecutors generally make their filing/charging decisions from the one child interview and minimal facts obtained by a "surface" investigation.

Generally, when a thorough investigation is conducted by a third party, or the child is properly interviewed, the case is not charged, is dismissed, or the finding by the judge is dismissal or not guilty or the jury finds the defendant not guilty. In the past two years I have seen at least a couple dozen cases that fit the above profile.

Still, even though their antiquated approach and procedure(s) has been proven to be generally futile, nothing changes. The poor quality of child and collateral interviews and inadequate investigations are still conducted, in the same manner as in the past.

In King County, prosecutors and the police agencies conduct interviews of children on a daily basis. Generally their training is received from on the job experience

and State oriented programs slanted and directed towards subjectiveness and the belief that children do not make up child abuse allegations.

The police agencies and prosecutor offices in these two counties suffer from continual rotation of an inexperienced staff and an antiquated approach to the allegation of child abuse.

Due to these sub-standard methods, techniques and high turnover, it is my opinion that poor child interviews and inadequate investigations create false allegations. This is supported by the numerous dismissals, acquittals and not guilty verdicts that I have assisted in achieving in the majority of the cases I have been involved in, specifically in these two counties.

The lack of the child interviewers having adequate methods and techniques, evaluation procedures and protocols in child interviewing should not be specifically focused on the Snohomish and/or King County police agencies and the prosecutors offices, but on the national child abuse criminal justice system level. Although these two counties have given the impression to other agencies across the United States that they are the leaders in this area. If the ineptness of the Snohomish and King County criminal justice system is an example of what is transpiring across the United States, then it is my opinion that the number of false allegations are greater than we are aware of. Research in this area is a must.

The Defense Interview

Many times as I have walked through the doors of the prosecutor's office, I have been subjected to what I have come to call the "Tribarricade." This means that besides the victim, I have the prosecutor, advocate and generally a parent in the interview room. The child is physically positioned in such a manner that you immediately get the feeling that the child has been told that you are "Swamp Monster" and that you are there to harm him/her. The mood of the interview is set. The first fifteen minutes of the interview, when a child interviewer should be establishing a rapport with the alleged child victim, generally they have to expend this time taking down the "Tribarricade" one wall at a time. This rapport building phase is the most crucial of the interview phases. It is imperative that the alleged child victim and the child interviewer establish a foundation to begin the questioning phases.

The one-on-one communication that should occur in an interview rarely occurs. The advocate, the prosecutor and the child's counselor have direct access to the alleged victim from the time the allegation is disclosed until trial. The one interview that the accused is allowed, can only be categorized as a farce. A child's attention

span is generally five to twenty minutes. The interview the defense is allowed to conduct, in essence, is sub-standard due to the environment that is orchestrated by the State, allegedly all in the name of the alleged child victim.

To date, in interviewing the alleged child victim, the general standard set up by the State for the defense is that they are generally given one try at interviewing the alleged child victim. If the interview fails to be productive, the prosecutor is unlikely to grant a second interview. Therefore, the defense, if they want a second interview, must move for a court order. Although my experience is that Judges grant these types of motions, there are many possibilities that the second interview will be denied. The State will argue that the first interview was traumatic to the child and the second interview will be as well. The prosecutors seem to forget that they or one of their agents conducted one to seven interviews of the alleged child victim prior to the request to conduct the interview. The "traumatic" argument by the State in my opinion has little merit. Since the alleged child victim is generally sent to counseling immediately after the allegations are disclosed. For the next six to twelve months the therapist and/or counselor expend the majority of the time talking about the alleged abuse with the alleged child victim. This argument about multiple child interviews may give the appearance that I am comparing an interview with therapy and counseling sessions. I am to the degree that generally, the alleged abuse, is approached in therapy in some fashion, during the contact with the child and the professional. In contradiction, I believe numerous interviews can be traumatic to the child, that is why I advocate the use of audio/videotapes when conducting the child interview. I am of the opinion that preserving each and every child interview would reduce the number of times an alleged child victim would have to be interviewed. Moreover, it may reduce the amount of post event contamination that can occur during repeated interviews.

So, who evaluates the defense and the state child interviewers? The answer is simple, maybe the interviewer herself/himself conducts a self evaluation from time to time. Maybe when the prosecutor objects to the form of the question or the question itself, during a defense child interview. Still, the child interviewer generally commits errors, introducing into the interview, methods and techniques that are generally leading and suggestive in nature. Twelve interviews who were analyzed by Underwager and Wakefield and the proportion of error-inducing statements made by the child interviewers was 57 percent (Underwager & Wakefield, 1990). Simply stated, there is no one individual and/or organization which dictates, manages, enforces, inquires or requires that a child interview be conducted by a proper protocol.

When the prosecution and police conduct the child

interview, generally there is no one in the interview room with the child and the child interviewer to object to the form of the question or the question itself. The reasons for these error inducing methods and techniques during child interviews are specifically because the attorney, investigator, and/or psychologist have received limited and/or basic training and education in the field of interviewing children and there is no one generally involved to evaluate their methods and techniques. According to research studies done by Kendall Tackett and Watson (1991): *The interviewers own expectations and bias often influence their perceptions of symptoms of abuse. The results of these studies show that the interviewer's gender, profession and expectations can influence their perceptions of behavioral indicators of sexual abuse.*

Do The Indigent Suffer?

Understanding what I just stated about the child interviews that are generally conducted by the State and the attorneys/investigators who represent the accused, it is possible that the indigent potentially could suffer. Most of the private retained attorneys are limited, budget wise, as to whom they can hire to conduct the child interviews. The indigent clients are generally at the mercy of a court system that does not allow for experts to participate in child interviews unless the attorney, argues to the court that the case is complex and expertise is necessary. On the other side of this argument, if an expert is hired or appointed by the State, the prosecutor will diligently argue that the defense is attempting to conduct a psychological examination of the alleged child victim. Maybe this is the intent of the attorney or maybe the issue is that he/she understands his/her limitations in interviewing children. Whatever the reasons are, little has been done to establish training for professionals who interview children and/or provide for proper method and techniques of evaluating their interviews. The objection by the state to have the child evaluated by an expert is a very interesting argument since the "truth" is what the prosecutor should be seeking.

In the past two years, I have been involved in cases where I was hired by an individual who had put his faith in the public defender program or a private attorney who lacked the understanding of child abuse issues or would not expend the funds to hire the proper experts when it was desperately needed. It was my client(s) opinion that if I had not become involved, he/she would have been forced to plea bargain. Ultimately an innocent person could have gone to jail.

Since the majority of individuals charged with a child abuse allegations can not afford a private attorney or legal investigator to handle their matter, they are left to be represented by public defense counsel. It is not my intent to point a finger here and say that the legal repre-

sentation is inadequate at this level. Although it is my intent to point out that the experience and the time public defense counsel can put into a case is very limited. Therefore, the questioning of the child interviewers and the process a child abuse investigation has been routed through is seldom questioned by defense counsel and investigators. I have to wonder how many individuals are in prison because a well meaning prosecutor and defense attorney failed to recognize the inadequacies of the current State(s) system approach to child interviewers and child abuse investigations. Research in this area is badly needed.

Setting up a National Protocol and Evaluation System

Many of the organizations that I belong to have created very broad and general child interview guidelines on how to approach a child abuse allegation and how to conduct an interview of a child. Still these organizations have no authority to discipline or monitor what their members are doing in a child interview and investigation setting. Let us look at some of these organizations that have interview protocols for child interviewers:

- *The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, their standards are:*

1. The child should be seen individually except when the child refuses to separate from the care giver. Discussion of possible abuse in the presence of the care giver during the initial interview should be avoided.
2. The interviewer should create an atmosphere that allows the child to talk freely, including providing physical surroundings and a climate that facilitates comfort.
3. Language and approach should be developmentally appropriate.
4. The interviewer should take the time necessary to perform a complete evaluation and avoid coercive quality.
5. Initial questioning should be as non-directive as possible to elicit spontaneous responses. If open-ended questions are not productive, more directive questioning should follow.
6. Highly specific questioning should only be used when other methods have failed, when previous information warrants substantial concern or when the child's developmental level precludes more non-directive approaches. (However, responses to these questions should be carefully evaluated and weighed accordingly).
7. Non verbal tools should be available to assist in communication. Anatomically detailed dolls

should be used with care and discretion. These dolls should not generally be considered conclusive of a history of sexual abuse.

8. The evaluator should approach the interview with an open mind to all possible responses from the child.

9. Evaluations should routinely involve reviewing all pertinent materials; conducting collateral interviews when necessary, establishing rapport, assessing the child's general functioning and development, and thoroughly evaluating the possibility of abuse.

According to The American Professional Society On the Abuse of Children these are guidelines for mental health professionals but are intended as a standard of practice to which practitioners are expected to adhere in all cases. They is currently no system to evaluate interviewers.

- *The American Pediatrics, their standards are:*

"It is desirable for those conducting the interview to use non-leading questions; avoid demonstrations of shock, disbelief, or other emotions; and maintain a "tell me more" or "and then what happened" approach. If possible the child should be interviewed alone. "

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Policy Statement:

1. Persons doing evaluations must be professionals with special skills and experience in child sexual abuse, and evaluations should be performed under direction of an experienced child psychiatrist or psychologist.
2. The child should be seen for the minimum number of times necessary by as few people as possible.
3. The interview should take place in a relaxed environment. The child should be allowed privacy.
4. Gathering a history on the child from parents or care givers is an important part of the evaluation. It is essential to obtain a history from the perspective of each parent.
5. The possibility of false allegations need to be considered, particularly if the allegations are coming from the parent rather than the child, if parents are engaged in a dispute over custody, or if the child is a pre-schooler. The interviewer should spend the time to establish trust and build rapport.
6. The interviewer must maintain emotional

neutrality, approach the case with an open mind, adapt a non-judgmental stance and seek out the unique particulars of each case. The child must be allowed to tell his story in his own words and great care must be taken to avoid leading questions.

7. The child's credibility must be assessed. Factors enhancing credibility include detailed descriptions in the child's own language, spontaneity, an appropriate degree of anxiety, consistency of allegations over time, and behavioral changes consistent with the abuse.

8. It is not necessary to use anatomically correct dolls. If used, care should be taken not to use these dolls in a way to instruct, coach or lead the child.

9. Children's drawings are helpful in assessing child sexual abuse. These include spontaneous drawings, or asking the child to draw a male and female, kinetic family drawings, what happened and where, and even a picture of the alleged offender.

10. Videotaping should be used when possible. The child should be informed as to the purpose of the videotape and the child's assent should be obtained prior to videotaping.

These guidelines have been developed to assist clinicians performing interviews and are recommended but there is currently no way to enforce these standards.

• *American Medical Association*

The American Medical Association adopted guidelines from the proceedings of the AMA House of Delegates, December 2-5, 1984. This guideline provides a substantial amount of research about the history of abuse and addresses other child abuse issues. Unfortunately, there is approximately two pages of general guidelines for interviewing children. There are no guidelines for the child interviewer to be evaluated and/or to enforce the suggested guidelines.

• *National Federation of Societies for Clinical Social Work*

I called this organization and asked them to send me their protocol on interviewing children. They told me that they did not have a specific protocol but that it was in their "Code of Ethics" manual. I asked them to send me this manual. When I received the manual and reviewed it, I discovered that there is no protocol on interviewing children, nor is there an evaluation and/or training for their members. This manual is basic, broad and general about their guidelines for their members.

• *National Association of Social Workers*

This organization does not have a protocol and/or specific guidelines for child interviewing and evaluating child interviews. They do however have "Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Protection." This standard does not address guidelines for interviewing children or an evaluation system for the child interviewer.

• *Child Protective Services-State of Washington*

Child protective services in the State of Washington have developed specific and enforceable standards for investigation of children in high and low risk situations involving alleged sexual abuse. (Child Protective Services, Chapter 26.21, 01/89). However, there are currently no guidelines in place for the actual conducting of interviews with children, and/or no system is in place for evaluating the child interviewer. There is a section under child protective services 26.32, section 8, that discusses what training a caseworker should receive. One of the training suggestions in Section 8 (f) recommends a five day school on the use of anatomical dolls. I find this interesting since the use of these dolls is highly controversial because of their suggestibility and should not even be used in an interview except as a last resort.

• *King County Working Agreement*

The King County's Division of Children and Family Services, Law Enforcement within King County and the King County Prosecutor's Office, have a working agreement between the agencies. There are investigative and child interview guidelines that are recommended by each agency and their personnel, but there is no training and/or an evaluation protocol suggested for child interviewers. It has been my experience with these agencies in King County that the agreement operates haphazardly. No one enforces the working agreement. It is an assumption by "all" that the agreement will be utilized. It has been my experience that these agencies work within the guidelines of the agreement when it benefits them.

A Suggested National Protocol

I have developed a child interview evaluation program for child interviewers who are employed by me. I believe this protocol has been a step in reducing post event contamination by our child interviewers. The following guidelines have been established for child interviewers to follow:

Interview Protocol

The first portion of this article has dealt with the lack of child interview protocols and child interviewers evaluation methods and technologies. Some of the critics in this profession may argue that there is insufficient research or information on how to conduct a proper child interview and/or to create specific standards, protocols or procedures on evaluating child interviewers. It is my opinion that the research that has been published in this area is available for child interviewers and should be implemented. Let us look at a protocol developed by several forensic psychologists, through the use of the Statement Validity Analysis. (Raskin & Yuille, 1991) This protocol is now a national standardized protocol in the United Kingdom:

Understanding the Five Phases of an Interview (Yuille, 1991)

1. RAPPORT BUILDING

You should meet the child and accompanying adult in a waiting area. Address the child first, then the adult. Attention should be paid especially to the child. Say something positive about the child, like, "What a nice looking dress." Be enthusiastic and friendly. During first few minutes of interview, ask questions involving historical memory, specific events (such as birthdays), and other events that will spark conversation and begin to build the relationship.

2. INTRODUCING THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

Questions about why the child has come to the interview may be discussed once rapport is established to flush out obvious signs of coaching. The importance of telling the truth should be addressed. Other general questions developed prior to the interview may be utilized to assist the child in providing a spontaneous disclosure about the alleged abuse (Raskin & Yuille; Walsh, G. 1989).

Use words and concepts within the child's frame of reference. Be alert to developmental differences in language and cognition (Cole & Loftus; Raskin & Yuille; Walsh G. 1989) and never assume that a child knows what he means by the use of a particular word. If there is any question in your mind, be sure to ask if the child knows what a word means.

3. FREE NARRATIVE PHASE

This is the core of the interview. You must discover from the child the name(s) that he or she gives to body parts and private areas. Never identify for the child the body parts allegedly touched by the suspect, let the child name them without suggestion from you (Daly, 1988).

Do not interrupt the child during the free narrative. Do not correct, interrupt or challenge the child during the narrative phase.

4. THE OPEN QUESTIONING PHASE

The purpose of this phase is to allow the child to elaborate about details described during the free narrative. An open question is one that cannot be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No." Open questions should cause the child to provide information.

5. SPECIFIC QUESTION PHASE

The purpose of this phase is to provide an opportunity to clarify and extend previous answers (Raskin & Yuille, 1989).

Understanding the proper steps of how to conduct a child interview may determine eventual success or failure. In addition it is necessary that the child interviewer understand the Four Walls of Anxiety (Daly, 1991):

• Understanding the Four Walls of Anxiety (Daly, 1991)

1. When the child and interviewer first meet for the interview .
2. When the interviewer requests information from the child about the child's body parts (specifically the names of his/her private areas).
3. When the interviewer requests information from the child about the alleged incident of abuse.
4. When the child does not provide any details of the alleged abuse but makes statements that he or she has been molested and/or the interviewer discovers that the child is providing false information.

Every interview will begin and end differently. It will have its individual characteristics. Sometimes a child will resist the child interviewers questions and/or provide what appears to be an obvious false disclosure. The child interviewer must be understanding and know how to deal with a difficult situation and child. (Daly, 1991).

Understanding how to deal with a difficult situation and child. (Daly, 1991)

When the child professes to have been molested but provides no details of the alleged abuse, the interviewer must insure that the child provide the 6W's (who, what, where, when, why and how). The child might be asked specific questions which are refocused, rephrased, or restated in some way. Often a short break can help the child relax before continuing the questions.

If the child's story is inconsistent, confront gently, as a confrontation may arouse anxiety, suspicion or anger.

Manage this with tact, emphasizing that you missed what the child said.

The child who is being untruthful can be dealt with in a variety of ways. After the child has provided a free narrative of what allegedly occurred, the child should then be asked specific questions to try and obtain detailed information about the alleged incident. After this avenue has been explored, the next method is to rephrase, in an overview style, restating what the child allegedly said, but adding details that the child did not provide which you know to be untrue. If the child is agreeable to what is added, the inconsistencies of the two stories should be discussed with the child. This may provide an avenue for the child to save face with reference to why he or she is providing untruths or embellishments.

You always run the risk of destroying rapport if you are forced to confront false statements by the child. Confronting the child should therefore be a last resort. But confrontation may be your only option when all the inconsistencies have been pointed out and the child fails to take advantage of the "avenues for saving face" provided.

As a rule, the child should be held accountable for all statements made to you. Utilizing proper interview steps, understanding the four walls of anxiety and how to deal with a difficult interview are essential in conducting a successful interview. Preservation of the interview can be accomplished by understanding why all child interviews should be audio/videotaped:

Understanding why audio/video taping should always be utilized when interviewing a child.

- Properly conducted video-and/or audio-taped interviews generally reduce the number of times a child will have to be subjected to an interview.
- The recording preserves the integrity of the interview and provides an accurate record (Yuille, 1991).
- The videotape provides a true replication of the interviewer's demeanor toward the child, and limits the suggestibility that often occurs in an interview setting.
- The videotape provides a record of the interview that captures the environment and statements where the interviewer receives child hearsay. When the child hearsay exception is exercised in court, the videotape record of the interview may be examined.
- The videotape is an important form of ongoing training for the interviewer
 - and provides professional protection.
 - The accuracy of the interview cannot be vali-

dated without the use of the video or audio tape. A professional cannot focus on conducting and interview and take verbatim notes at the same time. Even a second professional in the interview room is not capable of taking a 100% accurate notes.

- The videotape may be used to compare the statements of parents and professionals when there are inconsistencies with the statements of child witnesses.

- The goal of conducting any interview is to minimize the trauma to the child and to maximize the recall of the child. The audio-/videotape accomplishes this goal.

- The audio-/videotape may expose techniques that employ leading or suggestive questions.

- The audio-/videotape encourages guilty pleas by accused confronted by the tape. The police have reported to...(Dr. Yuille) ... that videotape of the interview of a child is an effective aid in obtaining a confession by the perpetrator (Yuille, 1991)

- The tape may be used as a therapeutic tool.

- The tape may be used to allay a child's fears of disbelief by parental figures, or to confront disbelief or denial when it actually exists (McFarlane & Krebs, 1986).

- Videotaped interviews may serve as a deterrent to initial retractions (McFarlane, Krebs, 1986).

- The videotape can assist the child in preparing for his or her court appearance (Yuille, 1991).

- Videotapes are increasingly being used to support the prosecution of criminal cases of child sexual assault in juvenile court actions to protect dependent children (Bulkey and Davidson, 1980).

- Testimony from a child under ten years of age is generally admissible through the child hearsay exception. The interviewer may be allowed to testify to what and how the child responded verbally and emotionally (affect). Preservation of this evidence should be considered first, as opposed to allowing the interviewer to testify to his/her subjective viewpoints.

- As State v. Sheppard (1984) documented with some children, videotaping actually may increase the accuracy of testimony. (Perry & Wrightsman, 1991)

Ego - The Child Interviewer's Downfall

Everyone who deals with children in an interview setting wants to believe that they are doing the right thing

for the alleged child victim and the accused. Unfortunately, this belief by the alleged child interviewer is generally a false perception. Child interviewers must learn to self evaluate on an individual child interview basis. I know instantly in a child interview when I have erred and I understand that it will happen again. Recognizing that this does happen is the first step in becoming a good child interviewer. Hopefully, as education is obtained and experience is developed by the child interviewer the mistakes are minimized. Still, evaluation of each child interview is imperative. It should not matter how much experience and education a child interviewer has. Evaluation is the key to improving the child interviewers methods and techniques. These standards may bring integrity to the child interviews conducted by the child interviewers.

Education - Qualifications

Some professionals believe that since they have a title in front of their name they are more capable of conducting child interviews, than say a police officer. This is something I have found to be untrue, but research in this area is needed. In the meantime, a move should be made to educate courts that the evaluation and certification process needs to be standardized.

Experience for the Interviewer-Learning to Evaluate

The child interviewer has to observe, evaluate herself/himself, learn to evaluate and learn from the child interviewer trainer for approximately six months to a year. I created and utilize the following form in evaluating the child interviewers who are employed by me; as well as observing other child interviewers:

Evaluation procedures, methods, techniques and research is the future in child interviewing. Research on this type of evaluation system must be conducted to determine the specific positive and negative results.

• Resources for the Interviewer

The child interviewer can obtain proper child interview methods and techniques from several resource areas, they are:

- The numerous city, county, law and university libraries are great resource centers. At these libraries the child interviewer should be able to review the methods.
- Attending seminars, lectures and other discussions about how to interview
- The experience the child interviewer can receive through observing other child interviews, education and evaluations of themselves and others is a valuable re-

source for the child interviewer.

- The child interviewer should learn how to research the area of child interviewing and how to locate resources.

A variety of these resources should be explored, examined, evaluated and utilized by the child interviewer. I believe that the more information a child interviewer has about the interviewing of children, the more aware they become that their approach to, attitude during, method and techniques used during a child interview can be a cause for an inaccurate and unreliable disclosure, as well as, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the disclosures by the alleged child victim.

Doing it Right The First Time

The past decade has taught law enforcement a lot about investigations and how important the initial call to a crime scene by the responding officer can be. The recent case in Milwaukee, WI, the mass murderer, Jeff Dahmer, is a very good example of what occurs, when investigations are not conducted properly the first time. Police should look at the Dahmer case as a warning of things to come. Attitudes about how all abuse cases are handled need changing and education is more important now than ever. If the police don't do the investigation right the first time, when are they going to have time to do it right? It is my opinion that the following ten steps should be adopted as a national standard in child abuse investigations:

The Future - The Ten Steps of Doing The Investigation Right the First Time.

- Prior Planning
Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance
- Education
Mastery of vital subject areas to include; child development, evidence, understanding motivations and false allegations, interviewing methods and techniques, follow-up investigations and the need for inter-agency cooperation.
- Establishing Roles and Responsibilities
Establishment and implementation of a plan whereby public and private individuals, departments and agencies work together toward a responsible and efficient resolution of child abuse allegations.
- Objectivity
Creation of a personal and cooperative "check and balance" system, including peer and self-evaluation which promotes objectivity in every phase of the investigation. Recognition that a professional cannot be both investigator and advocate.
- Documentation
Adoption of a standardized format for documenting information when a child abuse allegation is made. Such

a standardized format is available.

- Collection of Evidence and Testimony

Education in: identifying, collecting and preserving witness testimony and physical evidence; procedures for locating and accessing vital resources.

- Case Analysis

This process provides investigators with a breakdown of the case and a basic understanding of the merits of the case after the persons, records and issues are identified. It further highlights areas of concern and issues that should be addressed by the investigator.

- Case Action Plan

This prioritizes the steps necessary for efficient resolution of the allegations and provides for documentation of milestones achieved and periodic refocusing of the plan.

- Proper Interviewing of Child Victims

Establishment of a proper protocol for interviewing children that includes: education about the advantages of audio/videotaping, limits on the number of interviews, elimination of unnecessary interview props and adoption of methods for properly training and evaluation child interviewers.

- Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Acquisition of skills necessary for investigators to base summary comments and recommendations on facts, while carefully considering the strengths and weaknesses of the case.

Summary

In the field of child interviewing there has been much research conducted on the effects of the interviewer's behavior and technique on the outcome of a child interview. Another area of concern is the interviewer's own expectations and bias going into an interview situation. According to a recent study by Kendall-Tackett and Watson (1991).

The results of the present study indicate that a professional's gender profession, and expectations can influence their perceptions of behavioral indicators. The influence of interview factors occurred regardless of the age of the child. Previous research has focused on how interviewer's behavior affects children, especially concentrating on the effects of leading questions or use of anatomical dolls. There seems to have been an assumption that all interviewers approach children the same way. Yet this is clearly not the case. Our future training of interviewers should incorporate information about possible sources of bias. Interviewers who are alert to these may be better equipped to elicit more accurate information from children.

In the immediate future each city, county, state and public and private individuals and agencies will have to address child interviewing issues, develop and adopt

standards for interviewing of children that may hopefully bring integrity to child interviewers, medical examinations of children and child abuse investigations. Private organizations and public agencies, also need to begin addressing the need for an evaluation program for child interviewers and child abuse investigators.

In the field of child interviewing, a national standard and protocols needs to be developed and adhered to by professionals who earn their living interviewing children. There should be a movement by all professionals to have a certification process, that is based upon research, not subjective non-supported opinions and research. The standards could begin at the individual state level. The movement to certify Sexual Offender Treatment Providers that recently occurred in the State of Washington is a good indication that there is a movement by some to bring credibility to a system which has a questionable history of protocols and procedures.

Post event contamination must be addressed now. Research must be conducted in this area to bring about the necessary changes in the interviewing of children. It is a time for the professionals who are child interviewers to recognize where their weaknesses exist and how to make them their strengths. Controversy will rage about which protocol should be utilized. A division amongst the child interviewers is likely. Many of the professionals have mixed opinions about children's testimony and how children should be interviewed. It was surprising to the authors that little is available in the written guidelines in the child interviewing area. The idea of a national standard can not be overlooked and used as a pawn for self righteousness or personnel gain. It is time to make everyone accountable for their actions when dealing with children. Especially when the child may be a victim of abuse and someone has been accused.

In the field of child abuse investigations, law enforcement officials, child protective service workers, prosecutors, defense lawyers and investigators and other professionals in the mental health field, must take a more aggressive approach in investigating child abuse allegations. Training and educating their personnel about the issues of child abuse has never been more important. These professionals must learn what "Doing the Investigation Right, The First Time" can mean to a child victim and the accused.

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Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of sort it is.

1 Corinthians 3: 13 KJV