



VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION

STRENGTH, RENEWAL, AND HOPE FOR EVERY VICTIM

Child/Adolescent Forensic Interviewing

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Child/Adolescent Forensic Interviewer

FBI Forensic Interviewing Program



First program in a federal investigative agency.



Managed by the FBI's Victim Services Division, Child Victim Services Unit at HQ.



Highly experienced, skilled forensic interviewers with mental health/social work backgrounds.



CAFIs conduct interviews, provide case consultation, assist with operational planning in cases and provide training.



Interviewers will interview adult victims under special circumstances.



Will testify as an expert in local, state, federal, military court proceedings.

FBI Forensic Interviewing Program

- CAFIs **conduct interviews, provide case consultation, assist with operational planning in cases** and **provide training**.
The role of a CAFI in an investigation is to conduct the forensic interview of victims or witnesses, regardless of age.
- Interviewers will interview **adult victims** under special circumstances.
- Will testify as an expert in local, state, federal, military court proceedings.
- The investigative interview can be a **critical component of a complete investigation**. Information obtained in an objective manner from the victim may lead to other corroborative evidence, such as providing names of other victims and witnesses and other possible physical evidence.

Triage Model

- The CAFIs triage each case when scheduling.
- Goal is to utilize best interview resource for optimal outcome for both the case and the child/adolescent victim.

CAFIs triage case by case and provide consultation to determine:

- 1 Response time,
- 2 Who is best resource to conduct interview,
- 3 Best location for interview, and
- 4 Other considerations unique to each case.

Forensic Interviewing

- Designed to help victims **overcome barriers to disclosure**.
- Investigations/interviews conducted in a multi-disciplinary context with appropriate support services to victims and parents.

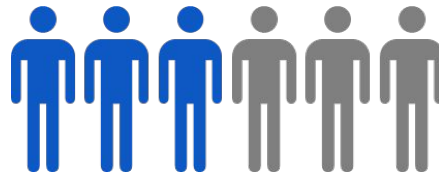


Historically, children were “subjected to 4 to 11 interviews...and in most cases they have experienced numerous other bouts of questioning from family members, therapists, social workers, and other interested parties.”

Leichtman & Ceci, 1995, pp. 569-570

Duplicative Interviews

Multiple duplicative interviews are discouraged. This practice has the potential to increase the child's distress and perception of the investigation as harmful, as well as increase the number of inconsistencies.



NCAC, 2019

The combination of **repeated** interviews with **leading, suggestive or coercive** questions can cause **serious harm** to children's memory and increase the amount of **false information** in their reports.

Quas et al., 2000

Forensic Interview

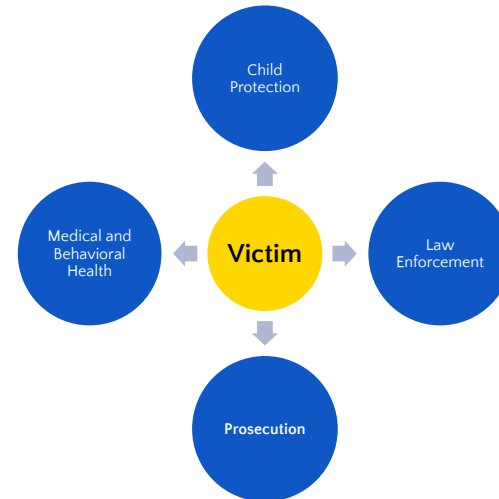
The goal of a forensic interview is to obtain a statement from a child/adolescent, in a developmentally sensitive, unbiased and legally defensible manner, that will support accurate and fair decision making in the criminal justice and child welfare systems.

Information obtained from an investigative interview might be useful for making treatment decisions, the interview is not part of the treatment process.

CAFI Interview Procedures

When it is feasible to do so, FBI personnel must conduct or facilitate forensic interviews using a **multidisciplinary approach**.

- **Minimizes** the number of times the minor is interviewed,
- **Facilitates** information sharing, and
- **Assists** with the coordination of support services (including child protection and assistance) with other agencies.



Forensic Interviewing

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- A forensic interview **should not be conducted in an environment where the minor could be distracted or possibly influenced**, such as at home or in the presence of parent/legal guardian.
- Interviews are best conducted in FOs or police departments with rooms specially designed for victim/witness interviews, at local CACs, or in a similar environments.

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Value of Using a trained Forensic Interviewer

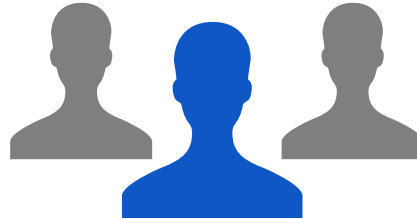
- Demonstrating **subject matter expertise (SME)** in forensic interviewing.
- Maintaining **neutrality** when fact finding and gathering statements about potential crimes.
- Providing **expert testimony** in court.
- Conducting interviews that are **hypothesis-testing** rather than **hypothesis-confirming**.
- Providing guidance for **large-scale victim cases**.
- Conducting **suicide/self-harm assessments** when indicated.
- Assisting with **crisis intervention** in coordination with the MDT.

Interview Considerations

- Child/adolescent victims and witnesses should be forensically interviewed if statements are for possible criminal charges.
- Forensic interviews are supported by research as best practice.

Interview Considerations

- These are fundamentally different interviews because of social, emotional, cognitive, sexual and language development.
- Protocol guidelines are established for the FBI on interviewing child and adolescents.
- How a child/adolescent victim/witness is interviewed can determine the threshold of evidence and statements admitted into court. If done incorrectly, the interview could become the focus of the court case.



A phased interview structure minimizes suggestive influences and empowers children to be informative.

These goals are accomplished by three major guidelines:

Children/adolescents receive clear information about the interviewer's job and the ground rules for the interview.

The interviewer builds rapport in a way that encourages children to talk.

The interviewer elicits information using the least directive question formats.

PHASED INTERVIEW APPROACH

Minimal Facts Interview

What is a Minimal Facts Interview?



Sometimes exceptional circumstances make it necessary for LE or Child Protective Services (CPS) to immediately gather information



This interview should only seek enough information to make immediate protective and investigative decisions.

Minimal Facts Interview

- An initial basic fact-finding interview may need to be conducted if you are a first responder. It should be a **Minimal Facts** interview.
- The purpose is to assess the need for **immediate medical attention or safety issues**.
- This information should be obtained from a **source other than the child** (unless the child is the only source) and not conducted with child present.
- This is usually an interview that is “minimal” so **not a lot of time** needs to be spent gathering these facts.



QUESTIONS?
