

Interviewing Children

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You will leave with having knowledge of:

- Purpose of the Brevard County Child Protection Teams and purpose of conducting formalized interviews
- Purpose of Joint Investigation with DCF/LE/CPT
- CPT Forensic interviews vs. Specialized interviews
- Identify the characteristics/goal associated with forensic interviewing
- Forensic interview / process
- Specialized interview / process

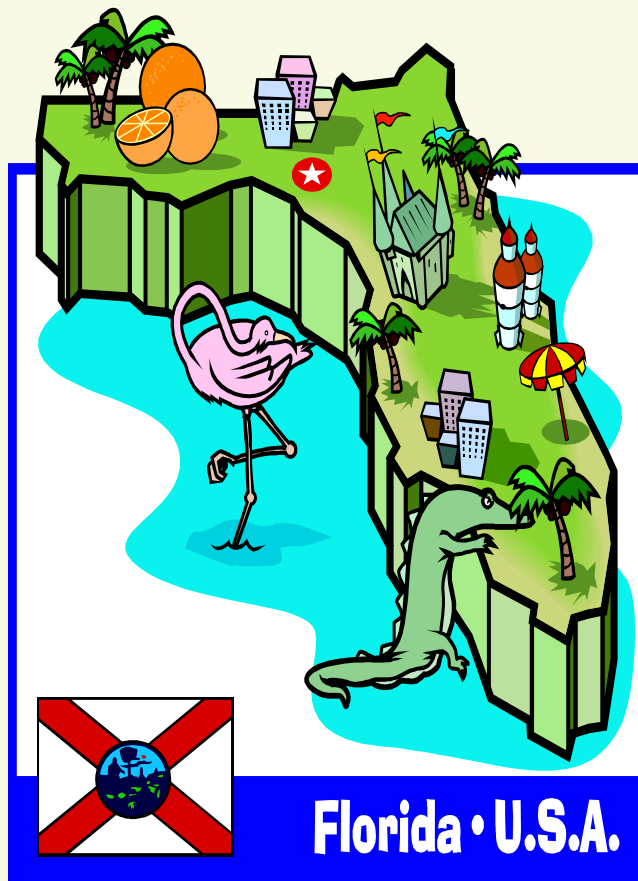
Child Protection Team Program Purpose

- The Child Protective Team Program operates on the premise that child abuse, abandonment, and neglect is a multifaceted problem requiring a multidisciplinary response to child protective investigations. The purpose of the program is to supplement the child protective investigation activities of DCF and/or law enforcement offices by providing multidisciplinary assessment services to children and families involved in child abuse and neglect investigations. (Child Protection Team Handbook, 2007)

Investigation of alleged maltreatment: who is involved

- DCF / LE / CPT
- LE investigation to determine if a crime was committed.
- DCF responsibility to determine the risk/safety of the child.
- Field interview of child interview by DCF/LE

Brevard County



Formalized interview
Age of child

- Law enforcement interviews
 - Children 12 and over
- CPT interviews
 - Forensic
 - Specialized



Forensic interviews
VS
Specialized interviews

A Forensic Interview is a structured interview to elicit a complete and accurate narrative of facts from the child/adolescent victim in a manner that is legally sound, neutral, and fact finding in nature. It is designed to determine whether a child or adolescent has been abused (or is at imminent risk of abuse) and, if so, by whom. (Child Protection Team Handbook, 2009).



Characteristics associated with Forensic Interviewing

- Non-judgmental
- Legally sound
- Without preconceptions
- Non-coercive; neutral tone
- Accurate, credible, complete info.
- Precise documentation



Goals of forensic interviews

To assist children in providing sufficient narrative, detailed information to determine whether or not a child has experienced or witnessed maltreatment;

And... to determine

- The nature and extent of the abuse including those responsible
- Sufficient details of the event to allow child protection or law enforcement to take appropriate action

And.... to do so without

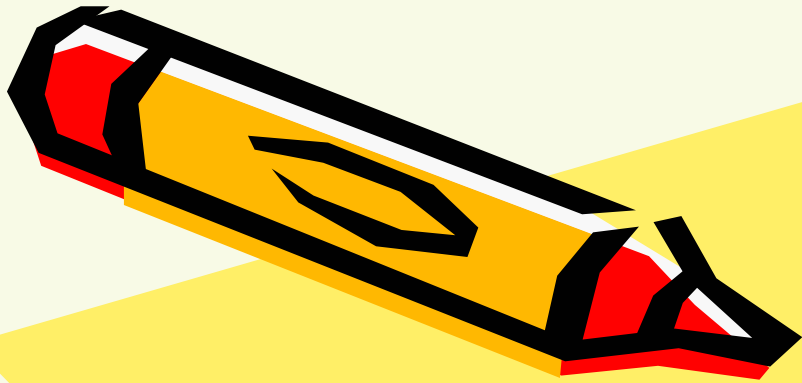
- Compromising accuracy
- Undermining credibility of
 - * the child
 - * the investigative process, or
 - * the data received
- Incurring or increasing trauma to the child

Interview Structure

- Phases/stages.
- What should be accomplished during each phase.
- Types of questions that can be used.
- Identification of inappropriate interview techniques

Benefits of a Structured Interview

- Provides guidance about how to interview
- May be useful in dealing with interviewee awkwardness and anxiety
- They can help to prevent inappropriate interview behavior and clinical practices
- A structured process will make the interview more legally defensible.



Stages of a structured interview

Pre-interview

Beginning

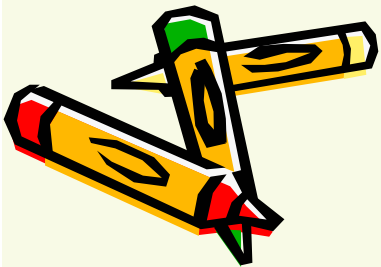
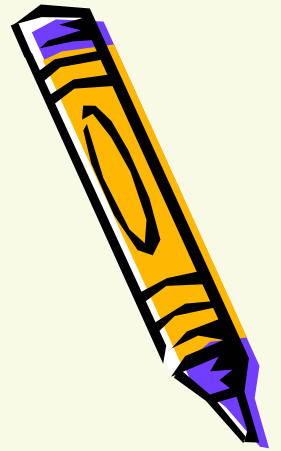
Information gathering/abuse
focused

End/closure



Pre-interview

- Meeting with DCF/LE
- Meeting with non offending caregiver



Beginning / Engagement phase

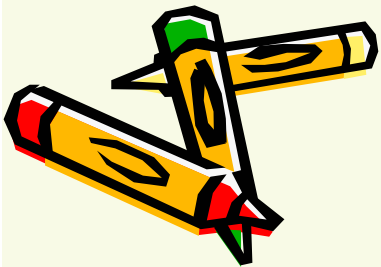


Introduction

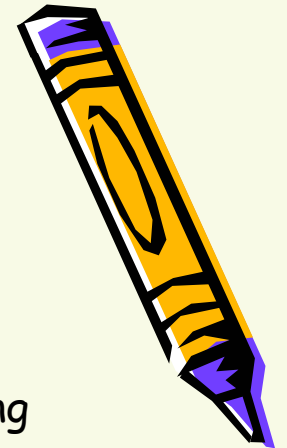
Develop rapport

Assessing child's capabilities/development

Interview expectations/Rules



Information gathering/abuse focused



Strategies for introducing topics of concern

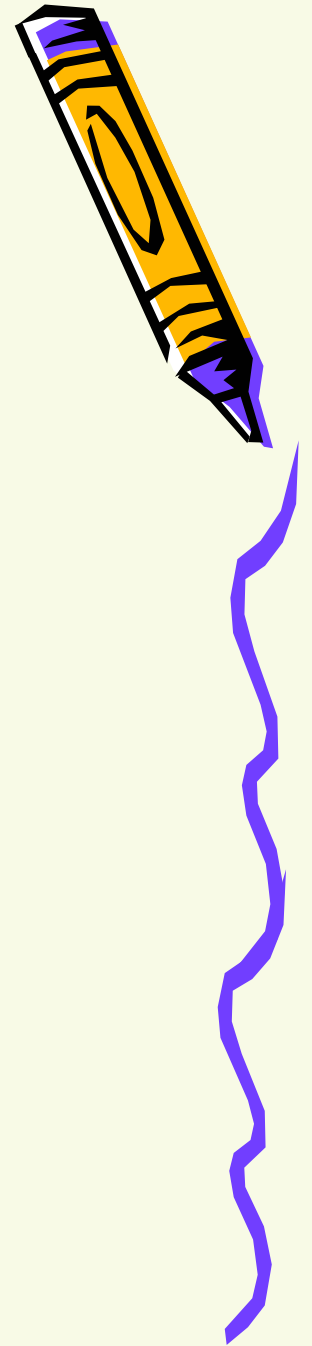
Transitioning from the introduction phase of the interview to the information gathering phase

- reference what the child may have initially disclosed during rapport building
- use family questions
- use escalation questions for active disclosures
 - tell me why I am talking with you today...
 - it's really important for us to talk about why you came to talk to me today ...
 - I heard you talked to "someone" (yesterday, last week, etc). Tell me what you talked about...
 - I heard someone is worried about you or that something may have happened to you...
 - I heard that someone may have bothered you...
 - I heard that someone may have done something to you that wasn't right



Eliciting details

- Balanced open minded approach
"Hypothesis testing"
- Funnel type questioning
- Allow child time to answer
- Focus on one event at a time
- Seek details that can be corroborated

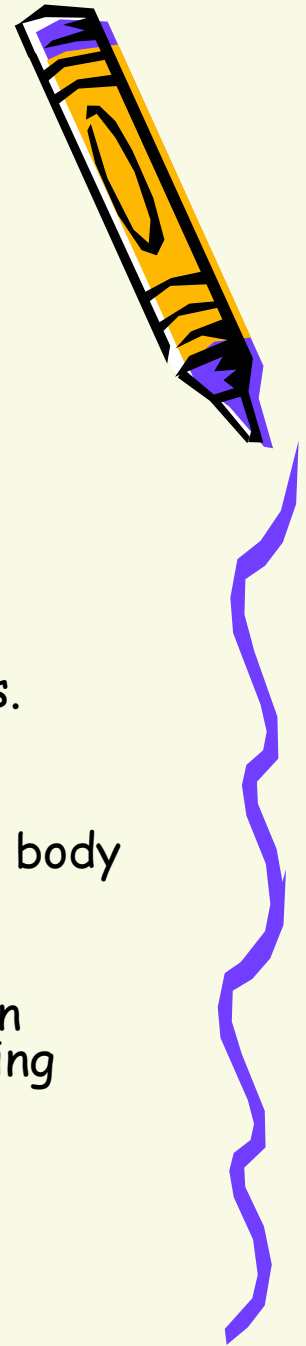


Use of Tools

Forensic Anatomical body drawings
Anatomical dolls
Gingerbread shapes
Free drawings

- Why use these?

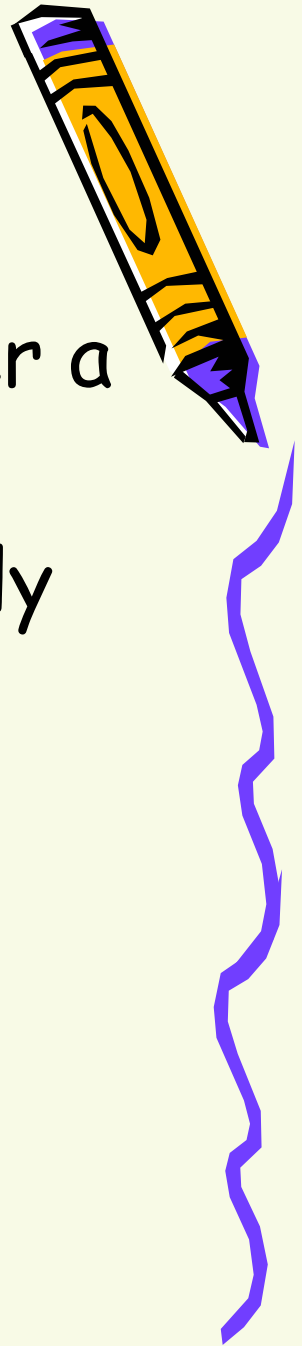
- Beneficial in using with younger children to elicit more details.
- Young children are usually more accomplished in demonstrating/showing than expressing in language
- Research and practice indicate young children benefit from a body map
- Tools decreases the need for questions
- Use of tools are more effective than only talking, especially in eliciting information about private parts/inappropriate touching
- May be helpful in ruling in/out coaching



Important to note:

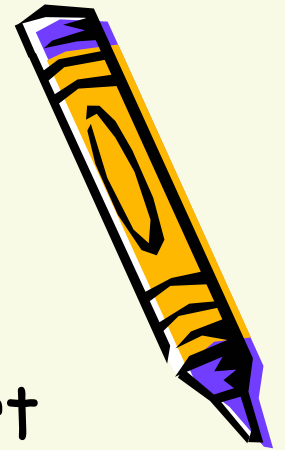
- anatomical dolls are used only after a child initially discloses.
- Used for clarification purposes only

*** Anatomical dolls are not used to elicit a disclosure



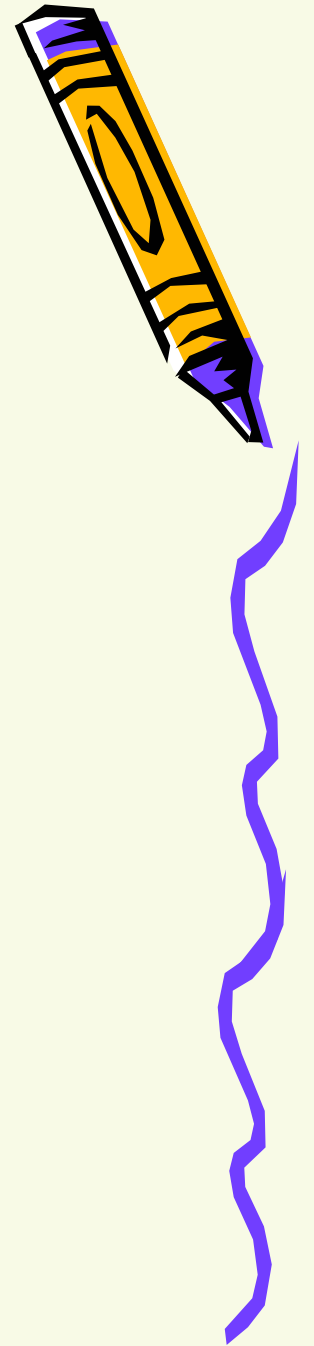
Disadvantages to using tools

- Certain tools may lead to attack in court e.g. anatomical dolls
- Tools may serve as distractions to children
- Some tools may elicit fantasy rather than reality
- Sometimes tools triggers play
- Young children may not be able to use media as representational objects



End / Closure

- Summarize
 - Recap and review
- Address safety
- Assess risk for recantation
- Child concerns
- End on a neutral topic



Factors that influence the accuracy in young children

- Age of child
- Amount of information/detail about an event
- Passage of time; disclosure delay
- Communication skills; mental ability
- Fear, Shame, Relationship with abuser
- Personality/Socio-cultural Factors
- Interviewer's Style and Authority
- Structure of Questions

Factors which may increase suggestibility or decrease accuracy

- Selective reinforcement
- Unclear expectations of process
- Implication of prior knowledge
- Leading questions
- Repeating questions Verbatim
- Negative depiction/Stereotypes
- Multiple interviews over time
- Multiple interviewers



Remember

The interview is just one part of the investigation



Specialized Interviews

A specialized interview is an interview with a child or a member of the child's family for the purpose of gathering clinical data, family functioning, family history, or other information for assisting with the assessment of alleged child maltreatment. (CPT Handbook, 2009)

Specialized interviews (cont'd)

- Information gathering in nature
- Include development of a risk assessment
- More flexible
- Does not follow an interview protocol
- The primary focus is NOT for legal purpose; however, they may be used in dependency or criminal cases as determined by CLS and/or SAO

Considerations taken into account when determining whether CPT will conduct a specialized interview or a forensic interview:

- A child's chronological age may not be the same as his/her cognitive and language development level. Children under the age of 4 should at no time be interviewed forensically, without prior assessment by a developmental specialist (psychologist, for example) who can document the child's ability to understand and respond to questions at a level that demonstrates adequate comprehension. At no point should a child under three and a half years of age be interviewed forensically.
- CPT Teams may interview children under 4 years old and include it as a specialized interview or as part of a psychosocial assessment, provided there is documentation of the child's cognitive, language and attention limitations. (CPT Handbook, 2009).

Conclusion

We've discussed:

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Questions ?

