

# What Was I Thinking?

A Framework For Ongoing Improvement of Forensic Interviewing Skills

Miriam Maples, M.Ed.  
Training Director  
miriam.maples@childrensmn.org



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# There Are No Perfect Interviews

- So stop beating yourself up...
- Instead focus on improving skills



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Forensic Interview Training

- Research on training outcomes:
  - 10-day training did not have a significant impact on questioning styles or the amount of accurate information elicited (Warren et al., 1999)
  - Impact on trainees' knowledge but not quality of interview behavior (Lamb et al., 2002)



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Forensic Interview Training

- Research on outcomes (Wood & Garven, 2000)
  - Students can quickly learn to recognize and avoid “improper” techniques
    - Suggestive language and behavior
    - Influence
    - Reinforcement
    - Inviting speculation or fantasy




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Forensic Interview Training

- Research on outcomes (Wood & Garven, 2000)
  - “Clumsy” interviewing difficult to correct
    - Lack of child’s comfort
    - Lack of warmth
    - Developmentally inappropriate language/sentence structure
    - Use of open-ended questions
    - Introduce topic of concern in non-suggestive way




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Ongoing Support and Feedback

- Improving outcomes of FI Training:
  - Benefits seen when steps taken to ensure what is learned is maintained (Lamb et al., 2002)
    - 1) By distributing training over time
    - 2) By receiving written and verbal feedback on interviews




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Ongoing Support and Feedback

- Improving outcomes of FI Training:
  - Benefits seen when steps taken to ensure what is learned is maintained (Lamb et al., 2002)
- 3) By receiving ongoing/continued supervision and feedback (Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin et al., 2002)
  - When supervision removed:
    - » Interviewers obtained less information and less quality information
    - » Open ended invitations declined and option-posing and suggestive prompts increased




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Practice

*Aldridge & Cameron, 1999*

- One-week, intensive forensic interview training
- Half-day follow-up sessions every three months
- Researchers found that interviewers still needed:
  - A “*number*” of experiences of interviewing with *different children*, in *different* types of *situations*, together with *ongoing supervision* encouraging reflective practice” (emphasis added)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Summary

Improve the Quality of Forensic Interviews By:

- Obtaining training
- Obtaining on-going training
- Practice/experience
- Receiving supervision
- Participating in high-quality peer review




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Your Goals for Peer Review...



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Structuring Your Peer Review Process

- Consider the status of the cases reviewed  
(Vieth, 2009)
  - Open/closed
  - Potential for discovery
- Consider your focus
  - Particular topics, or case/child characteristics
- Consider how to give feedback...



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Your Group Norms...



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Effective Feedback

- Type of feedback
  - Reinforcing
    - Encourage and reinforce desired behavior
    - Communicates what s/he did well
  - Tips:
    - Genuine, sincere, unconditional feedback is most effective
    - Be specific; say what the interviewer said or did and how it was helpful for the child/interview
    - Be succinct and thoughtful




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Effective Feedback

- Type of feedback
  - Constructive
    - Help the interviewer identify areas to develop
    - Communicate what needs to be improved
  - Tips:
    - Establish healthy group norms:
      - Don't hesitate, discount, nullify, soften, etc. – it's a waste of time and detracts from the purpose of improving skills
      - Separate behavior from person (e.g. your question was leading vs. you are a leading interviewer)
    - Be specific – be able to articulate the problematic words or behavior not your inference
    - Give specific suggestions for improvement




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Effective Feedback

- All peer review should have both reinforcing and constructive feedback
- All effective feedback
  - Requires you to think through:
    - What you want to say
    - How you want to say it
    - Why you are giving the feedback




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Effective Feedback

- Receiving feedback
  - Tips:
    - Avoid defensive response
    - Focus on understanding as much as possible
    - Accept that feedback can offer additional *valid alternatives*
    - Thank the person giving feedback! (*They are trying to help you*)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Effective Feedback

- Mode of feedback
  - Verbal
  - Written
  - Use of Tools




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Practice Giving Feedback

- Use of Tools
- Reinforcing or constructive feedback
- Be specific; identify:
  - The specific words or behavior.
  - Why it was helpful/problematic?
  - A suggested alternative (primarily for constructive feedback)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---