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OIOS hosts course on forensic interviewing of minors



The OIOS Investigation Division hosted a course on forensic interviewing of minors from 10-12 May. It was the first step in the development of a broader effort and brought together participants from OIOS, the Police Division, the Division for Safety and Security, UNICEF and UNDP to increase capacity and expertise for handling investigations into Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Experts from the National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC), together with OIOS, presented the course built on the concept of a multidisciplinary team approach that pulls together law enforcement, criminal justice, child protective services and medical and mental health workers into a single, coordinated approach that involves multiple interviews by different parties.

The NCAC forensic interview model emphasizes a flexible-thinking and decision-making method for interviewing that can be adapted to children of different ages and cultural backgrounds and is appropriate for interviewing children who may have experienced sexual or physical abuse. As a research-based approach, it is reviewed annually by a panel of practicing experts for appropriate additions or adaptations. The training includes audience discussion, child interview practicum, review of recorded forensic interviews and experiential skill-building exercises.

The first session served as a developmental tool for designing an overall learning programme to enhance SEA investigation capacity responsive to the particular needs of peacekeeping operations. The fully developed programme will be used to raise awareness, train staff on how to respond to SEA incidents and build on the specialized expertise in OIOS. Lessons learned from this first session will be used to improve the course for implementation later in the year.

Participants were actively engaged through the course in both the practice and theory of interviewing minors. Significant progress was made toward a more coherent understanding of the issues and needs, as well as solutions for emerging challenges in this highly complex area of work.

The course was closed by USG Mendoza, who remarked at the commitment of staff to continuously learn and improve in the face of sometimes challenging operational demands like those being experienced by staff, including OIOS investigators, deployed to the Central African Republic.

OIOS expects to adjust the course with lessons learned and present an updated version in November that includes more case studies and practice scenarios based on actual experience in peacekeeping operations. The course will again include participation of NCAC experts and representatives from all agencies and departments that deal with SEA, its prevention, response or remediation.

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