



## **EXTENDED FORENSIC INTERVIEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Before the First Appointment**

#### **How should I tell my child that he/she has to talk about this situation with a stranger – especially if they've already disclosed to me and/or been interviewed by someone else?**

Tell your child that they will be meeting with someone who is a specialist (or you pick the word that will best relate to your child, i.e. a counselor, an interviewer, a helper, a special child person, etc) in listening to children and talking about difficult things. Sometimes parents will designate this person as a friend of the Investigator who has opened the case (CPS or Police) if the child has had a good connection with that investigator. As you will have already met with the evaluator, you can verify the person's willingness to listen and try to understand everything that the child will be saying. Tell your child that even though they've told things to you (or to someone else), it's important that the information is given to the people who can help to figure out what to do. Encourage your child to "tell the truth."

#### **When should I tell my child this will be taking place?**

Give your child enough notice so that they don't feel it's a surprise to them but also don't give them too long a time period to worry about what they may have to do. Usually a day or two is enough time for them to feel comfortable with the first appointment. Following each appointment, you and your child will know when the next appointment is scheduled.

#### **What if my child starts to ask me questions about what they have to say?**

Tell them that you honestly don't know exactly what will be asked but that you have every confidence in them that they'll be honest and that the person will make them feel comfortable during the talk. Assure them that this person is a very child-friendly person whose job it is to talk to kids about difficult things. Tell them you want him/her to answer all the questions the best they can and to tell the truth.

Give the child permission to talk about any topics that they may be asked about. Be general in what you tell the child (i.e. *"It's ok to tell the interviewer what you told me (or whomever they told) happened to you when you were .....*"). Do not repeat the details of what they have disclosed and don't ask them anymore questions. Let the professionals do all the asking.

#### **What if my child wants to know why they just can't tell me and let me tell the other people?**

Tell your child that you might not know what questions to ask and how to ask them. And also tell them that because you love them so much, sometimes parents ask the kinds of questions that are about feelings instead of about the facts, which is why this special interviewer needs to do the asking. Assure them that they are not in any trouble with you or with the person they will talk with.

**What if my child asks if I'll be in the room with them?**

Assure your child that while they are talking to the interviewer, that you'll be in the next-door room talking to someone else getting information on how to make sure they will stay safe. Remind your child that since this is something they experienced, they are the best person to explain what happened.

**What if my child says they don't want to do this because they already told the story?**

Tell your child that you understand their feelings of frustration, especially since it's a difficult story to tell. But also tell them how brave they were for telling in the first place and how proud you are of their honesty and bravery. And because they were so brave, they're going to be helping keep other children safe by telling the story to the people who are in charge of keeping all children safe. If you would like to discuss additional ways to handle any of these or other questions with your child, please contact the Family Advocate. She will be happy to speak with you about your concerns.

**After the Appointments****Should I ask my child about his/her experience?**

You can certainly ask about how things went but don't ask for specifics about what questions were asked or what they talked about. Asking things like what the room was like and if the interviewer was nice are comfortable questions and shows that you are interested in their experience, without encouraging your child to give details.

**What if my child wants to tell me everything?**

This is unlikely as children are protective of their parents and caregivers, which is why they are reluctant to talk about such sensitive things in the first place. If your child initiates conversation with you, then you should be a good listener. Be careful to not react in a way that makes your child feel guilty (i.e. "Why did you do that?") or make them feel ashamed (i.e. "You should have not gone there.") or asks additional questions. Let them say what they have to say and thank them again for their honesty. If you feel disturbed by what they say, please contact the Family Advocate. She will help you process the information.

**Should my child seem upset or shows signs of sadness or shame?**

Most children feel relieved that they've been able to finally get their 'secret' out, so they may actually show signs of relief. They may just seem like their normal selves and want to play or do an activity that is fun. Some children show feelings, such as sadness or fear about the circumstance, especially if the allegations are about someone the child cares about or fears. Children may also be worried about consequences for family member or their reactions. Allow your child to express whatever feelings they have; then invite them to choose a simple activity that the two of you can do together. Remind them that you are not upset or shocked about what they have to say.