



MY CHILD IS HAVING A FORENSIC INTERVIEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

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?

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 talking to children about very 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. 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 child protection people.

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 this appointment.

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 what they have disclosed. 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 and in fact, are doing what every citizen should always do – which is to tell someone when someone else has done something wrong.

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.

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.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW**Should I ask my child about his/her experience?**

You can certainly ask about how things went but don't press them for specifics. The whole point of this interview is that the child doesn't have to keep repeating the discomforting details. Asking things like what the room was like and if the interviewer was nice are perfectly comfortable questions. It shows you're interested in their experience but respect they may be uncomfortable about giving you too many details.

What if my child wants to tell me everything?

This is unlikely – children are very protective of their parents and caregivers, which is why they are reluctant to talk about such sensitive things in the first place. BUT if your child appears to want to talk more to you, then certainly 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."). Let them say what they have to say and thank them again for their honesty. If you feel disturbed by what they say, please call us and we'll help you process the information.

Should my child show 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 may show feelings, such as sadness or fear about the circumstance, especially if their perpetrator is family members or someone trusted by the child.