
PRE-SCHOOL INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Pre-Interview Preparation for the Forensic Interviewer

Information from Investigator(s)

- Outcry or no outcry (process of discovery of concern)
- Conversation(s) between adults and child regarding allegations
- External information that might be used in interview
- What events have occurred following report?

Information from Parent/caregiver

- Child's names for people, important environments, private parts
- Child's typical routine(s)
- Suggestion for Narrative Practice
- What child has been told about the interview?

Pre-interview tour of CAC

- Slow things down
- Parent sees where child will be and child sees where parent will be

Review information and plan transitions to topic of allegation

- Determine likelihood of completing entire interview in one session versus possible need for two sessions
- Do not let your plan get in the way of following the child's lead

Preschool Interview Structure (3, 4, and 5 year old children)

Rapport and early engagement

- Allow time to settle into room and engage with media
- Be friendly, but don't over-talk or rush to questions
- Primary focus is to engage child both verbally and non-verbally

Language screen

- Engage child in conversation about activities and objects present in room
- Try to get a sense of their language
- Don't press too quickly with questions, especially if reluctant
- What kind of questions does child respond to?
 - *More narrowly focused open questions*
 - *"Wh" questions (who, what, where)*

Interview instructions omitted

- "Important that we talk about things that are true and real"

Family members

- May be helpful to use media to draw people and list names

Daily routine

- Ask about something you know that they do (info from caregiver interview)

Narrative practice

- Don't try to get sequence
- Ask about topic that you know they know something about
- Use their language

Transition to allegation-focused topics

- Listen for child to make their own transition
 - *Family members*
 - *Daily routine*
 - *May not seem logical to interviewer, but they just “got ready”*
- Begin with “what are you here to talk about?”
- Use previously planned transition prompts
- Monitor how far you should go

Scaffolding and clarification

- “One time or more than one time?”
- Script memory better than episodic memory
- Do not ask for specific incidents unless identified by child
- Preschoolers may only provide who, what and where

Check in with Team in observation room

- Child may or may not be comfortable being in room alone
- Interviewer should monitor use of approaches that are developmentally risky

Closure

- Return to rapport building activity
- May be ready to leave room immediately or may want time to finish drawing, etc.

Some 3-5 year old children will be able to fully complete the interview process in one session, while others may require a follow-up interview to cover all topics without resorting to overly direct questions or attempting to engage a young child who has become tired or anxious. This should be flexible and based on the needs of each individual child instead of rigidly set by a protocol. The follow-up interview should take place the following day or soon after the first session.

It should be the determination of the forensic interview as to when the child has done all she/he can do as there may not be time for discussion with the observers.