



Documenting the Child Forensic Interview

A Bibliography

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**Championing and Strengthening the
Global Response to Child Abuse**

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Scope

This bibliography lists publications concerning the importance of documentation of the child forensic interview.

Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are arranged in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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National Children's Alliance (2017). [Standards for accredited members](https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NCA-Standards-for-Accredited-Members-2017.pdf).
<https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NCA-Standards-for-Accredited-Members-2017.pdf>

Poole, D. A. (2016). *Interviewing children: The science of conversation in forensic contexts*. American Psychological Association. DOI:10.1037/14941-000

Whether as eyewitnesses or victims, children are often interviewed to provide evidence for forensic investigations. But strategies that may work for interviewing adults often do not work on children. Because of children's incomplete language development, their greater risk of retrieving inaccurate information in response to memory cues, and their desire to say what they think the interviewer wants to hear (whether truthful or not), their testimony can be unreliable. Sometimes, the interviewer's challenge is a child who does not want to talk at all. In *Interviewing Children: The Science of Conversation in Forensic Contexts*, Debra Poole introduces the science of interviewing children by explaining the problems that can arise when adults talk to children and how a forensic perspective mitigates these problems. She discusses child development considerations and presents a flexible approach to interviewing children. Through her descriptions of best practices, brief summaries of supporting research, example interview dialogs, answers to common questions from practitioners, and a final section for trainers and policymakers, Poole provides a roadmap for anyone working in a forensic context. This book is essential reading for those who interview children, supervise interviewers, review interview findings, or craft local policies about interviewing children.

Newlin, C., Cordisco Steele, L., Chamberlin, A., Anderson, J., Kenniston, J., Russell, A., Stewart, H., & Vaughn-Eden, V. (2015). [Child forensic interviewing: Best practices](https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/pubs/248749.pdf). *OJJDP: Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/pubs/248749.pdf>

This bulletin consolidates the current knowledge of professionals from several major forensic interview training programs on best practices for interviewing children in cases of alleged

abuse. The authors discuss the purpose of the child forensic interview, provide historical context, review overall considerations, and outline each stage of the interview in more detail.

Lamb, M., La Rooy, D., Malloy, L., & Katz, C. (2011). *Children's testimony: A handbook of psychological research and forensic practice (2nd ed.)*. John Wiley & Sons.

Price, H. L., & Roberts, K. P. (2011). [The effects of an intensive training and feedback program on police and social workers' investigative interviews of children.](#) *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 43(3), 235-244.

In the present study, we assessed the effectiveness of an extensive training and feedback program with investigative interviewers of child victims of alleged abuse and neglect in a large Canadian city. Twelve investigative interviewers participated in a joint training initiative that lasted 8 months and involved classroom components and extensive weekly verbal and written feedback. Interviewers were significantly more likely to use open-ended prompts and elicited more information from children with open-ended prompts following training. These differences were especially prominent following a subsequent “refresher” training session. No negative effects of training were observed. Clear evidence was found of the benefits of an intensive training and feedback program across a wide variety of investigative interviews with children. Although previous research has found benefits of training with interviewers of child sexual assault victims, the current study extends these findings to a wide range of allegations and maltreatment contexts.

Russell, A. (2010). Documentation and assessment of children's forensic interview statements. *Widener Law Review*, 16, 305-333.

Cauchi, R., & Powell, M. B. (2009). An examination of police officers' notes of interviews with alleged child abuse victims. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 11(4), 505-515. DOI:10.1350/ijps.2009.11.4.147

This study provided a critical examination of handwritten records (notes) of interviews contained in a sample of 89 police case files about alleged child abuse. Some of the notes examined related to initial disclosure (complaint) interviews which were not electronically recorded and were meant to be recorded verbatim. Notes of electronically recorded interviews, which merely constituted a convenient summary of the case details, were also examined. Collectively, the analyses focused on the accessibility, completeness and accuracy of the notes, and the degree to which the interviewers' questions and witnesses' answers were differentiated. In relation to the disclosure interviews, a substantial proportion of these were not accessible. Of those where the notes were obtained, the detail recorded was not a complete record of conversation, and there was often poor delineation of questions and responses. Analysis of the electronically recorded interviews showed that these were not an entirely accurate summary of event details even though the note takers' sole task was to document the interview. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Powell, M. B. (2008). Designing effective training programs for investigative interviewers of children. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 20(2), 189-208. DOI:10.1080/10345329.2008.12035804

‘Best-practice’ guidelines for conducting investigative interviews with children are well established in the literature, yet few investigative interviewers actually adhere to such guidelines in the field. One of the problems is that little discussion has focused on how such guidelines are learned and sustained by professionals. To address this concern, the current article reviews the key elements of interview training programs that are known to promote competent interviewing. These elements include: (i) the establishment of key principles or beliefs that underpin effective interviewing, (ii) the adoption of an interview framework that maximises narrative detail, (iii) clear instruction in relation to the application of the interview framework, (iv) effective ongoing practice, (v) expert feedback and (vi) regular evaluation of interviewer performance. A description and justification of each element is provided,

followed by broad recommendations regarding how these elements can be implemented by police and human service organisations in a cost-effective manner.

Jones, L. M., Cross, T. P., Walsh, W. A., & Simone, M. (2005). Criminal investigations of child abuse the research behind “Best Practices”. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 6(3), 254-268. DOI:10.1177/1524838005277440

This article reviews the research relevant to seven practices considered by many to be among the most progressive approaches to criminal child abuse investigations: multidisciplinary team investigations, trained child forensic interviewers, videotaped interviews, specialized forensic medical examiners, victim advocacy programs, improved access to mental health treatment for victims, and Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs). The review finds that despite the popularity of these practices, little outcome research is currently available documenting their success. However, preliminary research supports many of these practices or has influenced their development. Knowledge of this research can assist investigators and policy makers who want to improve the response to victims, understand the effectiveness of particular programs, or identify where assumptions about effectiveness are not empirically supported.

Piolat, A., Olive, T., & Kellogg, R. T. (2005). Cognitive effort during note taking. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 19(3), 291-312. DOI:10.1002/acp.1086

Note taking is a complex activity that requires comprehension and selection of information and written production processes. Here we review the functions, abbreviation procedures, strategies, and working memory constraints of note taking with the aim of improving theoretical and practical understanding of the activity. The time urgency of selecting key points and recording them while comprehending new information at the same time places significant demands on the central executive and other components of working memory. Dual- and triple-task procedures allow the measurement of the momentary cognitive effort or executive attention allocated to note taking. Comparative data show that note taking

demands more effort than reading or learning. However, it requires less effort than the creative written composition of an original text. Copyright # 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Berliner, L., & Lieb, R. (2001). [Child sexual abuse investigations: Testing documentation methods](https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/744). Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
<https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/744>

Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Sternberg, K. J., Hershkowitz, I., & Horowitz, D. (2000). [Accuracy of investigators' verbatim notes of their forensic interviews with alleged child abuse victims](#). *Law and Human Behavior*, 24(6), 699-708.
DOI:10.1023/A:1005556404636

Verbatim contemporaneous accounts of 20 investigative interviews were compared with audiotaped recordings thereof. More than half (57%) of the interviewers' utterances along with 25% of the incident-relevant details provided by the children were not reported in the "verbatim" notes. The structure of the interviews was also represented inaccurately in these accounts. Fewer than half (44%) of the details provided by the children were attributed to the correct eliciting utterance type. Investigators systematically misattributed details to more open rather than more focused prompts. These results underscore the superiority of electronic recording when the content and structure of investigative interviews must be preserved.