

ASKING ABOUT "MANIPULATION" TACTICS DURING THE FORENSIC INTERVIEW

Let's Call It What It Is - "Manipulation" Rather Than "Grooming"

A key variable in the manipulation process is the cultivation, creation, and subsequent abuse of trust of a child, his/her family, an organization, or even a community. "Grooming" has a positive social connotation and does not adequately convey how an offender systematically develops a relationship with a child's family, the child, and others beyond the family unit and then deliberately violates that trust when a child is sexually abused.



Benefits of Targeting the Nuances of Manipulation During Forensic Interviews

- Helps children provide more complete account of their experiences
- Provides investigators with a broader understanding of alleged offense(s)
- May reduce bias by illuminating offender's psychological manipulation



Asking questions regarding victim selection or access assists the interviewer, multidisciplinary team members, and others better understand what a child experiences during the initial phases of the manipulation process.



- "Tell me about meeting [...]."
- "What did you think about [...], the first time you met him/her?"
- "How did you feel about [...] the first time you met him/her?
- "What did your family or friends say about [...] when you first met him/her?
- "Did your feelings ever change about [...]?"

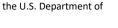
Asking about Differential Treatment, Enticements, or Financial Incentives

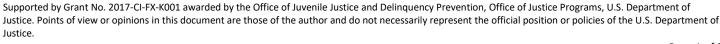
Rapport and developing trust with children is a key aspect of the manipulation process. Asking questions regarding differential treatment, material enticements, financial incentives, or special privileges provided to children should be topics covered in the interview.



- "What type of things did [...] first do with you?"
- "Did [...] give you or your friends something?" (If yes, then utilize the pairing principle "Tell me about [...]."
- "Tell me about any rules [...] had." "What would happen if you or someone else broke the rules?"
- "What did [...] say about your parents/caretakers/others?" (people significant to child)









Keeping the Secret

"Why don't children tell?" is a common question from people. To better understand the challenges individual children face when thinking about reporting maltreatment, the interviewer can ask questions regarding the disclosure process.



- "Did you ever think about telling?" If yes, "Tell me about..."
- "What kinds of things made you think about telling?"
- "Tell me if something was ever said about telling."
- "What kept you from telling someone?"
- "What's happened that you could now talk about [...]."

It's not enough that interviewers ask about "what happened". We need to also explore what happened from the beginning of an offender's interactions with a child and the child's caretakers and, once abuse began, what kept the child silent. Asking the child some of the above listed questions will aid you in better understanding a child's abusive experience.

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