

ASIAN, PACIFIC AND FILIPINO INTERVIEWING RECOMMENDATIONS

Amy Okamura, Patricia Heras, and Linda Wong-Kerberg report, in Sexual Abuse in Nine North American Countries (Fontes, 1995) the following specific recommendations for interviewing victims from Asian Pacific and Filipino backgrounds: (pages 85-86)

1. The child should be interviewed with the trusted adult to whom disclosure was initially made, and not in the presence of the family. In addition, extraordinary measures to ensure confidentiality are necessary. This recommendation is especially appropriate for school settings, where initial reports often originate. Uniformed police should not remove children from the school because it attracts too much attention.
2. Repeated interviews and more than one interviewer inhibit the child's disclosure. The child can be victimized further by those who are unaware of children's intense feelings of isolation from the family and vulnerability to their rejection.
3. The child's ambivalence, resulting from a desire for safety and a desire to remain within the family, should be recognized. An empathic worker or police officer should provide specific explanations about what will happen in the process of disclosure.
4. When out-of-home placement is appropriate, relatives and ethnically matched foster families are preferable. Asian Pacific and Filipino children and adolescents are unaccustomed to relationships with outsiders, probably have little experience being in the homes of different cultural groups, and may experience severe separation anxiety. Infants and toddlers who have been placed in non-ethnically matched foster homes where food and language are foreign may fail to thrive and appear depressed.
5. Continued contact with non-offending, accepting family members is crucial during separation. The case manager has a key role in bridging the communication and cultural gap between victim and family, supporting positive and consistent visitations, troubleshooting between foster parent, victim, and non-offending caretaker, and assisting with acculturation tasks for all concerned.
6. Authority figures such as child protection workers or case managers need to be proactive in their interventions, using outreach and other visible activities that foster communications with all members of an affected family. The imbalance of power, respect for authority, unfamiliarity with the child protection system, and language barriers put Asian Pacific and Filipino American families at a disadvantage. They are confused about what to do, how to act, when to show up, and whom, how, and where to call. They often wait for the person in charge to inform them of the required actions. When the worker does not take the time to explain or make frequent contact with families, or takes an adversarial approach, difficulties compound.

Written and Revised by The Institute for Human Services for the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training and Certification Program. 232 Investigative Interviewing in Child Sexual Abuse Cases.

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