

General Principles of Investigative Interviewing

1. Be a fact-finder. Remain objective. The interview is intended to determine the veracity of the allegation, open-mindedness is essential.
2. Be objective in your demeanor. Be careful not to differentially reinforce verbal statements made by interviewees through any means. This could prompt an interviewee to respond in the way he or she perceives you want him to respond.
3. Remain calm. Do not appear upset, judgmental, angry, or sad.
4. Allow enough time for a COMPREHENSIVE interview. Don't skip parts of the interview because you think you know the answer or because you are rushed for time.
5. Document, Document, Document.
6. Remain sensitive. Understand the difficult and personal nature of sexual abuse.
7. Be careful with why questions. These tend to make people feel defensive. (Why did you do it; why didn't you tell anyone, etc.?)
8. Create an investigative interviewing plan. Plan should protect the child victim and any other possible victims; decide who will be interviewed; in what order; in which locations. Be prepared to change your plan as new information emerges.
9. Decide the goals of each interview before conducting it. Then, plan your interview in order to ensure you cover the information necessary.
10. Control the interview so that you can implement your planning. Do not allow the person you are interviewing to abduct or high-jack the interview.
11. Make your expectations clear. Discuss who you are and why you are talking with the person. With children, discuss rules for the interview.