

**Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in  
Correctional Settings  
Notification of Curriculum Utilization  
December 2013**

The enclosed *Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in Correctional Settings* curriculum was developed by The Moss Group, Inc. (TMG) as part of contract deliverables for the National PREA Resource Center (PRC), a cooperative agreement between the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The PREA standards served as the basis for the curriculum's content and development with the goal of the *Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in Correctional Settings* curriculum to satisfy specific PREA standard requirements.

It is recommended that the *Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in Correctional Settings* curriculum be reviewed in its entirety before choosing which modules to use. Any alterations to the original materials must be acknowledged during their presentation or requires removal of the PRC and TMG logos.

BJA is currently undergoing a comprehensive review of the enclosed curriculum for official approval at which point the BJA logo may be added.

*Note: Utilization of the enclosed curriculum, either in part or whole, does not guarantee that an auditor will find a facility "meets standard". Rather, an auditor will take into consideration the curriculum used as part of their overall determination of compliance.*



## Module 7: Interviewing Juvenile Sexual Abuse Victims

**Notice of Federal Funding and Federal Disclaimer** – This project was supported by Grant No. 2010-RP-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice nor those of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), which administers the National PREA Resource Center through a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The Moss Group, Inc. would like to acknowledge the State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and Department of Human Services Forensic Interviewing Protocol, Third Edition for much of the information contained in this module.

# Module 7: Objectives

1. *Identify techniques for interviewing juveniles during investigations of sexual abuse in confinement settings.*



# Goal of a Juvenile Forensic Interview



- Obtain a statement from a child in a developmentally-sensitive, unbiased, and truth-seeking manner that will support accurate and fair decision-making in the criminal justice and child welfare systems.

# Sex is complex

**Views**

**Belief  
System**

**Personal  
Values**

**Culture**



**Upbringing**

**Lifestyle**

**Exposure**

**Automatic**  
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# Understanding Your Subjects

In order to be prepared to interview juvenile victims or suspects you must understand

- pathways
- thought processes
- level of cognitive maturity

# Pathways

Many children come into the criminal justice system after having been physically, emotionally and/or sexually abused.



Children who have been sexually abused by a family member are often enveloped into a secret life...they are good at keeping secrets

# Pathways

Many of your youth are coming to you...

- From single-parent households without strong male role models
- Having been a witness to abuse and chemical use
- With coping mechanisms developed to survive in their environment. These may include:
  - Lying
  - Stealing
  - Manipulating





# Delayed Reporting

There are many reasons these children may not report, including:

- They don't understand that it is wrong due to their histories of abuse.
- Fear of retaliation.
- Self-blame or guilt.
- Embarrassment.
- Lack of verbal capacity.
- Issue of obedience to adults.

# Delayed Reporting

Youths may feel guilty if reporting could cause their loved one (abuser) to go to jail.

Boys in particular may feel ashamed

- Expectation that men should fight and take control.
- Concern that abuse will “make them” homosexual.

# Delayed Reporting

Youth must **feel safe** before they will want to talk about the abuse.

*This is why many victims don't report abuse until later in life and why some cases are never reported.*

# Children With Past Victimization

## Tend to have...

- Low self-esteem
- Mistrust
  - Especially of authority
- Emotional pain
- Distorted view of self, relationships & reality
  - Worthless, nobody cares, “I am ugly”

# Forensic Interview

## Two Overriding Features

- Hypothesis Testing
  - Rather than hypothesis-confirming
  - Rule out as many interpretations as possible
- Youth-Centered Approach
  - Youth determine the vocabulary and content of conversation as much as possible
  - Avoid projecting adult interpretations onto events



# Essential Interview Techniques

- Confidentiality
- Rapport Building
- Create Safe Setting
- Genuineness & Authenticity
- Active Listening
- Effective Questioning
- Paraphrasing,  
Summarizing & Clarifying
- Non-verbal Actions
- Response time
- Limited amount of  
interviews
- Interview Teams
- Avoid judging, attacking,  
condescending, denial
- Avoid offering pity
- Avoid beginning with  
preconceived outcome
- Truth Finding

# Interviewing

## AVOID

- Wearing a uniform
- Having a gun visible
- Expressing surprise, disgust, disbelief, other emotional reactions
- Touching the youth
- Staring
- Sitting uncomfortably close



# Interviewing

## **DO NOT**

- Use bathroom breaks or drinks as reinforcements for cooperation
- Suggest feelings/responses to the youth
- Make promises



# Interviewing

## **AVOID**

- Encouragement directly linked to talking about the abuse
- Asking why youth behaved in a certain way
- Correcting youth's behavior during the interview unless necessary
  - When necessary, explain correction

# Interviewing

- Acknowledge youth if he/she becomes upset, embarrassed, or scared
- Avoid extensive comments about feelings



# Forensic Interview

## Phased Approach

- Each step has a purpose
  - Environment
  - Roles
  - Instructions
  - Empowerment
- Minimize suggestively
  - Free Narrative
  - Follow-up/Clarification

# Forensic Interview

## Phased Approach

- Preparation
- Introduction and Rapport Building
- Ground Rules
- Practice Interview
- Free Narrative-Topic Introduction
- Question/Clarification (follow-up)
- Closure

# Interview Phases

## Phase 1: Preparation

- Gather background information
  - Name, age, sex, relevant developmental or cultural considerations
  - Interests or hobbies
  - Relevant medical treatments or conditions
  - Events related to the allegation
  - Content of recent sex education or abuse prevention programs
  - Any information on what the youth calls various body parts
  - Nature of allegation and circumstances
  - Possible misunderstanding
  - Possible motives for false allegations
- Consider whether to use physical evidence (if applicable)

# Phase 1: Preparation

## Cultural Considerations



- If the youth is from a different culture, do some research in advance of the interview
- Some cultures
  - discourage youth from looking authority figures in the eye
  - discourage correcting or contradicting an adult.
- Youth from these cultures may be more likely to answer multiple choice or yes-no questions, even when they are uncertain

# Phase 1: Preparation

## Developmental Considerations

Children vary in...

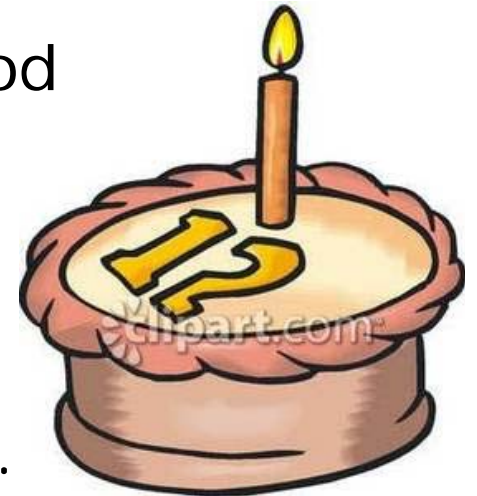
- cognitive ability
- language
- memory
- attention spans,
- social skills and
- emotional maturity

***It's essential for the interviewer to understand the different stages of child development and develop an appropriate interview environment, activities, and questions accordingly.***

# Adolescent Development

## Age 12: Declaration of Independence

- Adolescent bounces between childhood and adulthood, being
  - irresponsible and responsible,
  - testing parental authority and then depending on it.
- Focused on social life, friends, school.
- May be preoccupied with own attractiveness, continue friendships with same sex
- Learning to respect the rights and needs of others.



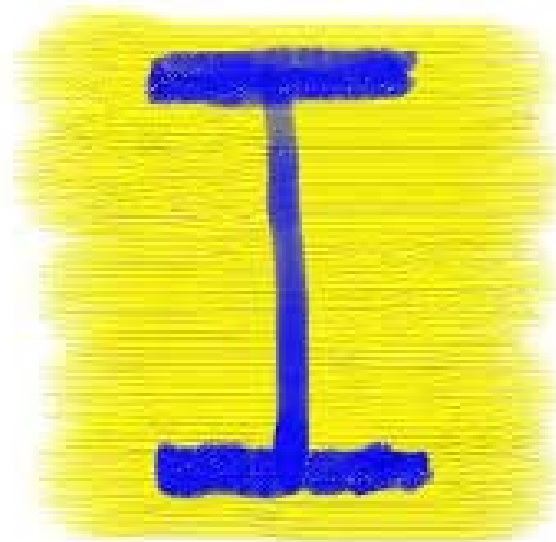


# Adolescent Development

## Age 14: The Age of Rapid Change

### The five "I's"

- Impulsive
- Intense
- Idealistic
- Immediate
- Indestructible



# Adolescent Development

## Age 14: The Age of Rapid Change

The six "M's":

- Moody
- Messy
- Monosyllabic
- "Mouthy"
- Money-oriented
- ME-centered



# Adolescent Development

## Age 14: The Age of Rapid Change

- Development of parental conflicts as
  - the peer group begins to serve as the adolescent's reference for their standards of behavior.
  - the maturing teen struggles against being treated like a child

# Adolescent Development

## Age 16: Friends, Clothes, Music, More!

- "Who am I?"
  - Questions about identity
  - Development of values, beliefs, clearer sense of self
- Continued struggle around independence
  - Testing of rules
  - Questioning of authority.
  - May become extremely opinionated and challenging



# Adolescent Development

## Age 16: Friends, Clothes, Music, More!

Risk: Depression

- Feelings of sadness and depression should not be dismissed as "normal" moodiness during this period.
- Situational losses can lead to depression and even suicide.
- A 2009 national survey found that during the 12 months before the survey:
  - 17.4% of female and 10.5% of male high school students considered suicide
  - 8.1% of female and 4.6% of male high school students attempted suicide

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention, Percentage of U.S. High School Students Reporting Considering, Planning or Attempting Suicide in the Past 12 Months, by Sex, United States, 2009.

[http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/statistics/youth\\_risk.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/statistics/youth_risk.html)

# Phase 1: Preparation

## Limited Language Ability

- Use vocabulary and sentences that are at the individual's level of cognitive and language development
- Ask one question at a time; avoid lengthy complex, multiple-part questions
- Speak slowly and allow sufficient wait time
- Consider the use of anatomically correct dolls

# Phase 1: Preparation

## Developmental Considerations

- Each child will have a different attention span and a different way he/she communicates
- No matter how tough or street savvy your youth may be, they are still kids

# Phase 1: Preparation

## Profile: Developmentally Disabled

- Wants to please people in authority
- Relies on authority figures for the solution
- Watches clues from interviewer; wants to be friends; wants to please
- Real memory gaps
- Quick to take blame
- Short attention span
- Allow person to use their own words
- Do not ask leading questions
- Use concrete ideas (who, what, when, where, how)
- Beware of vocabulary (anatomically correct dolls)



# Interview Phases

## Phase 1: Preparation

- Generate alternate hypotheses and hypothesis-seeking questions
- Prepare—
  - Questions to test alternative hypotheses about how allegations arose
  - Questions to test alternative interpretations of details stated in allegation



# Interview Phases

## Phase 1: Preparation

### Number of Interviewers

- One interviewer may increase rapport
- If more than one, seat other out of line of sight
  - Second in supporting role



# Interview Phases



## Phase 1: Preparation

### Recording

- Video Recording
  - Position camera so everyone in the room can be seen/heard
- If not recording, ensure accurate documentation—exact words spoken

# Interview Phases

## Phase 1: Preparation

### Physical Setting

- Relaxing, uncluttered, neutral environment
- Do not imply the youth is in trouble
- DO NOT put a barrier between you and the interviewee
- If setting is not neutral, explain
- Away from traffic, noise, disruptions
- Turn off cell phone

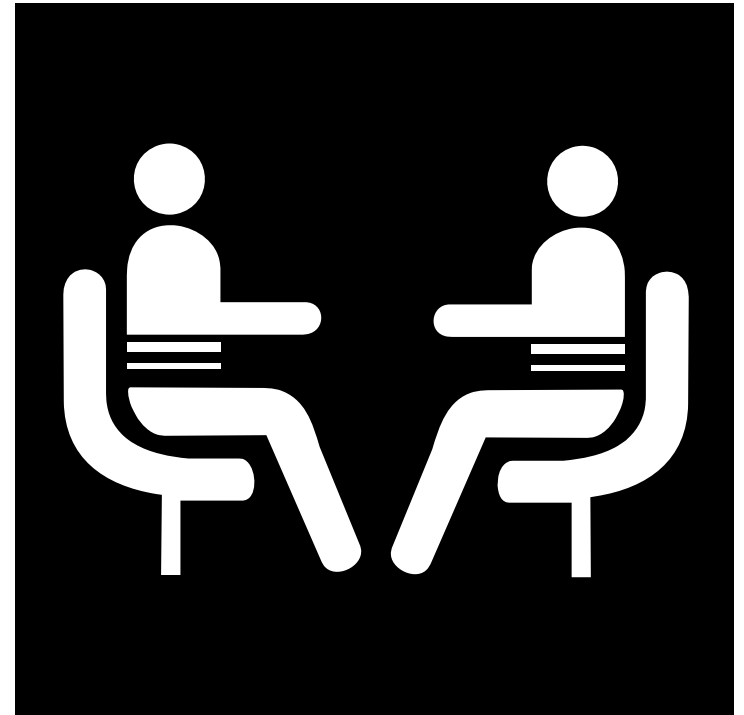


# Interview Phases

## Phase 1: Preparation

### Physical Setting

- Interview room should be prepared in advance of the interview
- Ensure interview does not interfere with the youth's meal and that the youth has had a recent opportunity to use the restroom



# Interview Phases

## **Phase 2: Introduction and Rapport**

- Introduce yourself and explain your job
- Tell youth about recording (if applicable)
- Appear relaxed, friendly and interested
- Familiarize yourself with youth's verbal skills and cognitive maturity
- Build rapport through open-ended questions

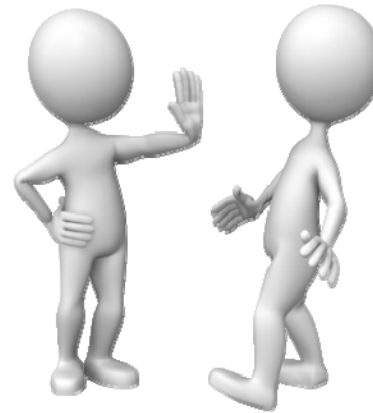
# Activity



# Interview Phases

## Phase 3: Establish the Ground Rules

- Don't guess at answers
- Ask youth to tell you if they don't understand something
- Give youth permission to correct you if you make a mistake
- Tell the truth





# Interview Phases

## Phase 4: Conduct a Practice Interview

- Only when interviewing younger youth
- Four general principles
  - Only open-ended prompts
  - Invite youth to be informative with comments
  - Encourage youth to talk with head nods and active listening
  - Reinforce ground rules

# Interview Phases

## Phase 5: Elicit a Free Narrative

- Raising the topic
  - Start with the least suggestive prompt that avoids mention of abuse or particular individuals
  - If this doesn't work, be more specific—but avoid mentioning specific behavior or projecting adult interpretation onto the allegation

# Activity



# Interview Phases

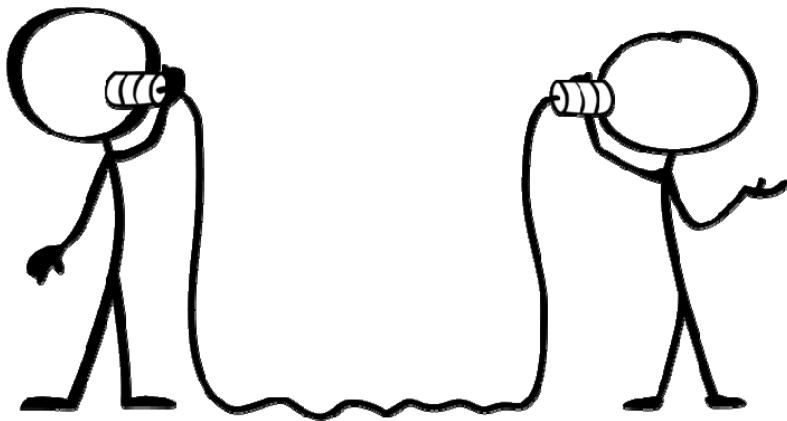
## Phase 5: Elicit a Free Narrative

- Ask youth to provide a narrative description of the event:
  - Research shows children's responses to open-ended prompts are longer and more detailed than responses to focused questions
  - Don't feel the need to prompt—silence is a powerful tool
  - If youth becomes upset, acknowledge behavior and address but avoid extensive comment
  - Don't interrupt to ask questions—revisit the question later in the interview

# Interview Phases

## Phase 5: Elicit a Free Narrative

- Ask youth to repeat comment if you have trouble hearing them
  - Do not try to guess what they said
- Be tolerant of pauses in the conversation
  - Appropriate to look away to give youth time to continue



# Activity



# Interview Phases

## Phase 6: Question and Clarify

- Avoid jumping between topics
- Clarifying
  - Description of events
  - Identity of perpetrators
  - Whether allegations involve single or multiple events
  - Presence and identities of witnesses
  - Whether similar events have happened to other youth
  - Whether the youth told anyone about the event(s)
  - The time frame and location/venue
  - Alternative explanations for the allegations

# Interview Phases

## Phase 6: Question and Clarify

- Avoid leading questions
- Be sure that the statements made are unambiguous
- If youth refers to a person, ensure to clarify exactly who they are talking about
- If youth uses slang to refer to a body part, be sure to clarify
- Ask questions like “Is there anything else” or “Did I forget anything” before moving to a different topic



# Interview Phases

## Phase 7: Close the Interview

- Ask if the youth has any questions
- Avoid making promises
- Chat about neutral topics for a while in order to end on a relaxed note
- Thank the youth for coming—but avoid thanking the youth for disclosing abuse



# Activity



# Interviewing

## Common Behavior

Expect the following behavior during an interview:

- crying,
- fidgeting,
- becoming hyperactive,
- becoming angry,
- attempts to escape by changing the topic or going to the bathroom,
- withdrawal,
- become aggressive, or
- use avoidance or distracting tactics.



# Interviewing

## Common Behavior

Be aware what a youth is going through during these sorts of interviews.

- Guilt, self-blame, betrayal

Choose your language carefully. Are you using language that will enhance feelings of shame?  
“Couldn’t you have stopped the abuse?” “Why did you let it go this far?”

# Final Thoughts on Youth

## **Be aware of teens' perception of the interviewer.**

- Peer relationships are their first priority
- Watch for non-verbal communication.
  - Adolescents are not typically concrete thinkers
  - The inability to communicate does not = lie.
- Be aware of prior victimizations.
- Juveniles have little knowledge of their rights.
- Intimacy and sexuality is a major part of the development.

# Questions?

