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# THE PROTOCOL AND BEYOND:

## A FORENSIC INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE FOR PEER AND SELF REVIEW

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# CATTA

Child Abuse Training and Technical Assistance Center  
working with communities to prevent child abuse

421 E. Cotati Avenue, Suite C  
Cotati, CA 94931  
(707) 992-0834

www.cattacenter.org  
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## History of Peer Review for Forensic Interviewers

The field of Forensic Interviewing borrows from the medical community a model for skill-based improvement. Early studies focusing on the usefulness of peer review took a look at experts in radiology who gathered together to discuss images and analyses of their work product. In addition to the medical community, the academic world also offers a template for the coming together of colleagues in groups of varying sizes to uphold the quality of work published.

The importance of incorporating ongoing peer review as part of forensic interviewer performance improvement (*NCA 2017 Forensic Interview Standard*) has been canonized in practice standards as a core belief about how forensic interviewers learn and grow (*Stolzenberg & Lyon, Journal of Forensic Social Work, 2015*). Although it is often said that there is no perfect interview, peer review allows interviewers to share techniques and highlight areas where improvement may be needed.

## Approach

This guide has been designed to follow the California Child Forensic Interview (CFIT) model, but may be adapted for other nationally recognized Child Forensic Interview models (APSAC, NCAC, etc). It includes methods for evaluating both quantitative and qualitative factors for a particular interview. This guide pre-supposes that the interviewer has a basic command and working proficiency in the California CFIT model. It should be approached as a tool that may offer growth in content areas essential to high quality forensic interviewing extending beyond rote memorization of a particular model.

## Purpose of this Guide

In addition to serving as a guide for the purpose of peer review, this guide has a function in individual supervision with forensic interviewers, as well as the individual interviewer's self-review of her or his own work.

Every forensic interviewer should possess the ability to speak about his or her technique, identify and explain applied research, and in general be able to articulate (to a judge, jury, etc.) what he or she did and why he or she did it. This guide emphasizes peer review as an opportunity to articulate different Forensic Interview processes amongst colleagues — prior to the courtroom. Each specific peer review content area should include a practice component of reviewed interview for purposes of trial testimony.

## Acknowledgments

**This guide was developed by Nicole Farrell for the CATTAs Centers, 2016**

The author wishes to acknowledge and thank the forensic interviewers and researchers who have created and shared peer review tools well before this guide was developed — and whose contributions have shaped and improved practice in our field.

In particular, thank you to Miriam Wolf, Tom Lyon, Linda Cordisco Steele, Suni Levi, Kara Marts, Karla Voorhees, Antonio F. Jiménez Jiménez, Bertha Nevarez, Midwest Regional Children's Advocacy Center and Redwood Children's Center for sharing their materials and expertise.

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This guide is also available in Spanish. Contact your regional CATTAs Center (see below) for copies.

### **CATTAs Training and Technical Assistance**

CIR's CATTAs Centers are available to provide technical assistance setting up peer review for forensic interviewers. Contact us for assistance with:

- Creation of flyers
- Distribution to regional centers and teams
- Registration for peer review sessions
- Confirmation letters and maps to site

#### **In Northern California:**

Kris Murphey at [kris.murphey@cirinc.org](mailto:kris.murphey@cirinc.org) or 707-992-0834

#### **In Southern California:**

Crystal Cardenas at [crystal.cardenas@cirinc.org](mailto:crystal.cardenas@cirinc.org) or 805-584-0526

**Find out more about training and technical assistance provided by CATTAs at [cattacenter.org](http://cattacenter.org)**

## What is Peer Review for Forensic Interviewers?

Peer review can take several forms. It can be limited to one agency, or incorporate different agencies across a wide region. It can be formal, or somewhat informal. Whatever the structure and size, there are some universal guidelines.

The National Children's Alliance (NCA) Standard for Accreditation for Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) specifies the following:

*Individuals who conduct forensic interviews at the CAC must participate in a structured peer review process for forensic interviewers a minimum of two times per year, as a matter of quality assurance.*

*Peer review includes participants and facilitators who are trained to conduct child forensic interviews and serves to reinforce the methodology(ies) utilized and provide support and problem-solving regarding shared challenges.*

*Structured peer review includes:*

- *Ongoing opportunities to network with, and share learning and challenges with peers,*
- *Review and performance feedback of actual interviews in a professional and confidential setting,*
- *Discussion of current relevant research articles and materials,*
- *Training opportunities specific to forensic interviewing of children and the CAC-specific methodologies.*

*STATEMENT OF INTENT: Participation in peer review is vitally important to assure that forensic interviewers remain current and further develop and strengthen their skills based on new research and developments in the field that impact the quality of their interviews. Peer review is a complement, not a substitute, for supervision, case review and case planning. (NCA, 2017)*

## Peer Review Culture

Those embarking on peer review should be able to give — and receive — constructive criticism related to how things went during an interview. Peer review allows forensic interviewers to examine sections of an interview and share suggestions with each other for better wording or practices.

### **A peer review network should be developed with intentionality, not just convenience**

When planning peer review, consider what is most needed. Should this be a regional peer review, allowing for a variety of opinions but possibly requiring more staff time to arrange? Should it be interviewers only, or should other team members be invited?

### **Create a culture of safety and candor within the review process**

Because honesty creates the best opportunities for peer review, the peer review setting must be created to foster a feeling of safety and candor. Those being reviewed should be prepared to receive suggestions, and those making suggestions should be honest yet kind with their feedback.

### **Make good use of colleagues' time**

While positive feedback and peer support are vital in this process, it does not serve people to set aside time for peer review only to hear “Good job!” and then go home. Peer review sessions should be organized, and useful feedback should be offered even if it includes criticism.

### **Peer review is different than performance evaluation**

Interviewers should be able to offer up less-than-perfect interviews, without having that reflect badly on a later job performance evaluation. The desire to become a better interviewer is to be commended.

## **Privacy and Confidentiality**

### **It is important to ensure privacy within the chosen location.**

The peer review location should be arranged so that the interview is not visible to passers-by during review. The volume for the recorded segment should be high enough for the reviewers to hear, but not for others in the building or outside.

### **Confidentiality must be ensured amongst reviewers.**

Each person participating in peer review must sign an agreement regarding confidentiality of the case being reviewed. A sample of this agreement is included with this packet, and should be adapted to meet the needs of the jurisdiction involved in the case.

### **Develop a retention policy related to any note-taking or other work product.**

Notes taken during peer review may become evidence in certain circumstances. Consult the district attorney for the case under review for guidance on notes.

## **Facilitator Guidelines**

### **Preparation**

- Did everybody get a map or directions to the location?
- Does everybody know the timing of the session?
- Are you going to show a whole tape, or skip to relevant parts? (A whole tape can be useful, as parts of the interview may be useful to understand other parts of the interview. However, if time is short, it can be useful to show only the sections most interesting for review and brainstorming.)

### **Considerations on the day of event**

- Remember to have participants sign confidentiality agreements.
- Monitor comfort issues in room (temperature, refreshments).
- Remind participants that honesty is good and that you want to make good use of participants' time. Encourage thoughtful and constructive criticism. Be appreciative of anyone who has brought an interview for review.
- Remind participants that local practices vary, and what works in one community may be different than what works in another community.

## Sample Peer Review Worksheets



**General Peer Review Worksheet**

The original peer review template on which this form was based was created by Linda Steele of the National Children's Advocacy Center. With appreciation to Linda, this version was adapted with permission by Miriam Wolf for use in California CFIT-2 Training.

Introduction	REVIEWER COMMENTS:
Introduced self with name and role	
Explained/gave context for interview and setting	
Explained room, recording, etc.	
Developmentally & culturally appropriate explanations	
Confirmed child's language-of-comfort before proceeding (if applicable)	
If using interpreter, explained and demonstrated use of interpreter	
Rapport and Responsiveness (throughout interview)	
Interviewer demeanor (friendliness, voice tone)	

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Pacing matches child's needs – in speech and in timing of phases/activities	
Proximity, posture and volume	
Established pattern for conversational turn taking	
Attending behaviors (eye contact, verbal following, reflective listening, smiling)	
Regular use of child's name	
Developmental observations and adaptations	
Cultural nuances of interview	
Additional rapport building activities, if needed	
Responses to child's affective, feeling statements	
Responses to child's expressions of distress or self-blame	

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Instructions	
All 10-Step instructions given, with examples	
Instructions provided with developmentally appropriate adaptation (or omitted with child-specific rationale)	
Narrative Practice (NP)	
Effectively introduced "scripted" topic for NP	
OR organically selected a topic for NP, following child's lead	
Follow-up prompts expanded child's narrative	
Effective use of 'wh' questions	
Responded to developmental needs by moving to 'wh' questions and/or scaffolding	
Transition between phases of interview and throughout interview	

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Timing and pacing	
Breaks	
Return to rapport building mode as needed	
"Stopping" the interview (if indicated)	
Disclosure	
Use of open-ended prompts	
Use of 'wh' questions	
Limited use of option-posing questions, followed up with open-ended prompts	
Descriptive details elicited about distinct events	
Details gathered which could be used by team members to elicit corroboration	

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Dynamics/decisions about initial disclosure explored	
Question types used (or not used) reflected developmental nuances	
Adaptations in flow/pacing/focus made to match in child's behavior/demeanor during interview	
Use of alternate strategies/media/tools (if relevant)	
Need for tools/media established	
Selection of age- and culturally-appropriate media/tool(s)	
Flexible question design/strategies if 10-Step prompts exhausted or unfruitful	
Forensically defensible choices and uses of flexible strategies	
Consideration of follow-up or multiple interviews, if indicated	
Alternative Hypotheses	

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Gentle exploration of inconsistencies or fantastic elements	
Issues addressed in developmentally appropriate, non-leading fashion	
Clarification of unclear statements	
Closure	
Pacing	
Addressed questions or concerns of child	
Return to neutral topic	
Explanation of next steps as appropriate	
Thank child for participation	
Ways to contact the team for follow-up, if needed	

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Other	
Non-verbal gesturing	
Team Specific Procedural Requirements/Protocol (e.g., competency assessment)	

Interview skills to work on:

Strengths demonstrated during interview:

Plan/Areas to work on:



**Question Design Peer Review Form**  
**Developed by Miriam Wolf with material from Tom Lyon**

This form allows reviewers to identify the types of questions used in a 10-Step/NICHD model forensic interview. A similar form could be developed for use with other Forensic Interviewing models.

While EVERY interview will have some Yes/No or Forced Choice questions, interviewers should strive for an interview where the MAJORITY of the types of questions during both narrative practice and the subsequent allegation/abuse inquiry phase) land in the top two boxes.

Note that, when coding, it is important to note that not all questions that start with “Tell me” are open-ended prompts. If the interviewer has selected the focus of discussion, these questions are actually WH/Focused Topic questions. You can distinguish these from open-ended Tell me more prompts if you could, effectively, drop the “Tell me” from the question and substitute a stand-alone WH/How question. For example, “Tell me what clothes you were wearing” is the same as “What clothes were you wearing?” which is actually a WH/How question, not an open-ended prompt. Similarly, not all WH/How questions are open-ended; there is a difference between “What color was his shirt?” is not as productive a question as “How were his clothes?”

**Name of interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CHILD**

Place a checkmark if the interviewer delivered all of the instructions as worded in the 10-Step Interview. Note that the first three instructions require counter-examples to be given for “full credit”.

	Example	Counter-example
1. Don't know		
2. Don't understand		
3. You're wrong		
4. Ignorant Interviewer		n/a
5. Promise to tell the truth		n/a



## QUESTION DESIGN CODING

### Option 1: (basic feedback about type of questions asked)

- Code types of questions by placing a tick mark in the box next to the type of question asked.

### Option 2: (next level of feedback; provides the interviewer feedback about the type of question asked as well as the productivity of the question)

- Note what type of question was asked by the interviewer.
- Place a √ tickmark in the corresponding box if the question elicited a multiple-word response from the child.
- Place an X tickmark in the corresponding box if the question elicited a one- or two-word response from the child.
- Place a zero (0) tickmark in the corresponding box if the question elicited no response, or “I don’t know” or “I don’t remember” responses.

### OPEN-ENDED PROMPTS

Tell me/Tell me everything/Tell me more

And then what happened?/What happened next? You said X. Tell me more about X....

### FOCUSED PROMPTS/WH QUESTIONS

### FORCED CHOICE/OPTION POSING QUESTIONS

Yes/No questions

Did/Was/Or

*Can you* tell me? (Note: Placing 'Can you' in front of a more open-ended prompt (e.g., Can you tell me everything you saw" is a forced choice question. Instead of a tickmark here, note what question was asked with *Can you* in front; this is often a habit that can be eliminated when interviewers are made aware of his this phrase impacts their otherwise quality questions.

**Comments/observations (continue on back, as needed)**

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## Sample Peer Review Form

Thank you to Midwest Regional Children's Advocacy Center for their permission to share this form.

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Peer Review Call: \_\_\_\_\_ Site of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Process	Y	N	N/A	Comments	Interview Process	Y	N	N/A	Comments
Introduce self; explain role/ equipment					Make use of "wh" questions?				
Are f.i / child seated appropriately for camera recording?					Make use of open ended questions				
<b>Rapport:</b> establish child's comfort, communication and competence?					Allow for follow-up questions / clarification to child's narrative? ( if tools used during interview, are they used appropriately?)				
Establish child's developmental level					<b>Timing:</b> use of silence;/ pace and length appropriate; does not interrupt child				
Demonstrate cultural competency/ cultural sensitivity?					Check with observers before closing interview				
<b>Ground Rules:</b> establish rules of interview (ok to say I don't know, repeat, don't understand, if I say something wrong, etc.)					<b>Closure:</b> showed respect for child and empathy; thank them for participating in interview				
<b>Interview:</b> establish child's names for body parts?					<b>Overall:</b> did f.i. address child by name? was demeanor friendly and warm? maintain eye contact? address questions/concerns of child and explain next steps as appropriate? Does f.i. revert back to neutral topic?				

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**Additional comments for the interviewer. Please provide both positive feedback/strengths of the interviewer as well as areas the interviewer can improve on. Following the peer review, these tools will be shared with the interviewer.**

***Interview skills to work on:***

***Strengths demonstrated during the interview:***

***Other comments:***

Sample Confidentiality Agreement for Peer Review

Thank you to Redwood Children's Center for their permission to share this sample document. Be sure to consult protocol for your county and adapt as necessary before using.



County of Sonoma
Human Services Department
REDWOOD CHILDREN'S CENTER
2755 Mendocino Avenue, Suite 204
Santa Rosa, California 95403
(707) 565-6360

An interagency project of:

Sonoma County Human Services Department

Sonoma County District Attorney's Office

Sonoma County Department of Health Services

All Sonoma County Law Enforcement Agencies



PEER REVIEW ATTENDANCE & CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

As a professional attendee at this peer review, I agree that my contact with any client information provided will be kept absolutely confidential. Any discussion of my observations will be only within the context of fulfilling my professional role. I will refrain from commenting about clients or case content, or association on social media, in social gatherings or in other non professional setting, and I will absolutely refrain from any use of names of individuals observed on tape (either audio, video, or DVD) or any written materials.

I also accept that professional ethics require me to immediately make it known to the trainer/facilitator if I am, or have been, personally or socially acquainted with individuals whose case will be reviewed. I will abide by the decision and guidance of the professional facilitator if I should excuse myself for the portion of the training/meeting where this case will be discussed.

Whenever possible, I will seek the guidance of the group when an issue of confidentiality arises.

Date:

Signature

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Evaluating Specific Content Areas**

This guide contains information to assist in the review of particular content areas of a forensic interview. These areas include:

- Responsiveness to developmental considerations
- Question design
- Child abuse dynamics
- Adaptations or deviations from protocol
- Use of self/Countertransference
- Working with your Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

Prior to the peer review session, the interviewer should identify two to three content areas from the list above for analysis with the peer review network.

Distribute the content areas to peer review participants either in advance or the day of the review session.

Have the peer review network view your interview sample.

Either one by one, or at will, peer review participants respond to the considerations contained in the identified content area.

Allow for cross-talk.

The interviewer shall develop and articulate one courtroom-style response related to each content area.

Repeat the above for each forensic interviewer whose interview is to be reviewed.

**Content Area # 1: Responsiveness to Developmental Considerations**

An example of the interviewer asking a question that did not appear to match developmental considerations occurred \_\_\_\_\_.

Her response was \_\_\_\_\_.

This interviewer made adaptations to the interview protocol clearly based on developmental considerations during \_\_\_\_\_ phase of the interview.

These adaptations were effective/not effective because \_\_\_\_\_.

The child displayed developmentally meaningful affect during \_\_\_\_\_. It looked like \_\_\_\_\_.

How else could the interviewer have better adapted to this adolescent needs?

How else could the interviewer have better adapted to this preschooler's needs?

How else could the interviewer have better adapted to this school-aged child's needs?



**Content Area #2: Question Design**

Do I feel like I understand what this child sought to tell the interviewer?

Do I feel like I know what happened to this child?

Did the child have the opportunity to maximize their ability to provide narrative responses?

Where did the interviewer move to direct questions unnecessarily?

Where did the child appear to become confused?

I wish I had heard the interviewer ask \_\_\_\_\_.

To explain or defend my use of a particular question design/question type, I would say \_\_\_\_\_.

I would cite the work of \_\_\_\_\_.

When I heard myself ask \_\_\_\_\_, I felt \_\_\_\_\_.

**Content Area #3: Child Abuse Dynamics**

Child abuse dynamics were evident in these parts of the interview

\_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

The interviewer managed them by \_\_\_\_\_.

I/the interviewer was effective/ineffective as evidenced by \_\_\_\_\_.

Reluctance for this child looked like \_\_\_\_\_.

The interviewer managed the reluctance by \_\_\_\_\_.

A subtlety that was missed was \_\_\_\_\_.

This impacted the interview by \_\_\_\_\_.

I would explain the child abuse related dynamics as they impacted this interview to a

jury by saying \_\_\_\_\_.

**Content Area #4: Adaptations/Deviations from the Protocol**

The interviewer made a deviation from the protocol here: \_\_\_\_\_.

I/she did so because \_\_\_\_\_

This appears to be effective because \_\_\_\_\_.

This can be understood/explained by citing the work of \_\_\_\_\_.

I would/would not (select one) make the same decision again because

\_\_\_\_\_.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ about having made this adaptation.

**Content Area # 5: Use of Self/Countertransference**

I felt/the interviewer appeared to feel \_\_\_\_\_ during  
\_\_\_\_\_ portion of the interview.

My/her feeling state was apparent/not apparent. (select one)

I/the interviewer felt/appeared to feel \_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I need to be more aware of \_\_\_\_\_.

I was surprised when I felt \_\_\_\_\_.

I want to build my skills with the following population(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Content Area #6: Working with the MDT**

During this interview I was effective in explaining \_\_\_\_\_ to my team.

I enjoy/dread input from my team (Select one. Explain)

Working with an MDT is challenging because \_\_\_\_\_

I can improve the above dynamic by \_\_\_\_\_

Working with an MDT is awesome because \_\_\_\_\_

I can better engage \_\_\_\_\_ (team member) by \_\_\_\_\_.

I am set off by \_\_\_\_\_ (team member) because \_\_\_\_\_.

MDT members never understand \_\_\_\_\_ about forensic interviewing.

I can educate and inform them by saying \_\_\_\_\_.

In order to improve this dynamic, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

Share examples of effective team interactions.

## Summary of Readings on Peer Review for Forensic Interviewers

- **Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P. W., & Mitchell, S. (2002). Is ongoing feedback necessary to maintain the quality of investigative interviews with allegedly abused children? *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(1), 35-41.**

The authors cited several studies which found a high number of narrative responses elicited using open-ended prompts compared with information elicited using more focused prompts. The researchers posit that the research-based recommendations replicated in these studies are “widely endorsed, but seldom followed”. Additionally, earlier studies suggested that both the use of a detailed protocol and ongoing supervision and feedback were absolutely crucial to the quality of forensic interviews.

This study examined two sets of interviews. The first set of interviews was conducted using the NICHD protocol by experienced forensic investigators who received regular supervision and feedback on their interviews. The second set of interviews was conducted by the same investigators immediately following termination of the supervision-and-training regimen. Results included that the number and proportion of invitations declined significantly when supervision ended, while the proportion of option-posing and suggestive prompts increased. Results also showed that withdrawal of supervision was associated with a decline in the quality of information obtained from alleged victims, as well as a decline in the amount of information elicited.

The authors concluded that when supervision was removed, interviewers adhered less to best practice guidelines and this affected their performance. Several previous studies (Lamb, Hershkowitz, Sternberg, Esplin, et al., 1996) and (Sternberg et al., 1996) showed similar results.

Michael E. Lamb, PhD, is Professor and Head of the Department of Social and Developmental Psychology at University of Cambridge. His scholarship has significantly advanced developmental psychology while also having a major impact on legal authorities, forensic investigators, policymakers, and others concerned with the well-being of children. The late Kathleen J. Sternberg, PhD, was a research psychologist and staff scientist at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. Her research focused on applied issues related to children's development. Yael Orbach, PhD, is a researcher and staff scientist at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and one of the developers of the NICHD interview protocol. Phillip W. Esplin, EdD, specializes in forensic psychology. He was a Senior Research Consultant with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Child Witness Project, from 1989 through 2006. Suzanne Mitchell, MSW, is the Program Director at Salt Lake County Children's Justice Center in Utah.

- **Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Orbach, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Horowitz, D., & Esplin, P. (2002). The effects of intensive training and ongoing supervision on the quality of investigative interviews with alleged sex abuse victims. *Applied Developmental Science, 6(3), 114-125.***

The authors explained that most professionals agree that best practice guidelines should be followed when conducting investigative interviews in the field, that interviews should be completed as soon as possible after the alleged offenses by interviewers who introduce as little information as possible using open-ended prompts, and that open-ended questions are more likely to produce more accurate responses. They suggested however, that although research-based recommendations are widely endorsed, they are seldom followed. The researchers compared interview quality over 96 interviews conducted by 21 interviewers who were trained according to professionally recommended practices, to interview quality of the same 21 interviewers in the six months prior to this training. Conditions examined included validation, rapport building, victims' protocol, and suspects' protocol.

Findings from the study suggested that benefits of training in interview best practices are obtained when steps are taken to ensure the maintenance of these same practices. The results further suggested that systematic evaluations of programs consistently affect the trainees' knowledge but had no significant impact on the quality of their interviewing behavior. Lastly, results suggested that meaningful, long-term improvement in the quality of information obtained from alleged child victims of sexual abuse is observed only when well-established principles are operationalized clearly and concretely, and when training is distributed over time.

The results of this study mirrored previous studies by both Orbach, et al. (2000) and Sternberg, Lamb, Orbach, et al. (2001) which revealed that the quality of interviewing improved when forensic interviewers were trained to implement a protocol that operationalized the consensus recommendations of diverse professionals and scholars, interviewers practiced using that protocol, and interviewers received written and verbal feedback on their interviews.

Michael E. Lamb, PhD, is Professor and Head of the Department of Social and Developmental Psychology at University of Cambridge (see above). The late Kathleen J. Sternberg, PhD, was a research psychologist and staff scientist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland. Yael Orbach, PhD, is a researcher and staff scientist at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and one of the developers of the NICHD interview protocol. Irit Hershkowitz, PhD, is a professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Haifa, Israel. Since 1995 she has conducted field studies of young alleged victims, witnesses and suspects of abuse and has mainly published on investigative interviewing of children. Dvora Horowitz, PhD, is with the Israeli Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and a lecturer in the Beit Berl Academic College. Phillip W. Esplin, EdD, specializes in forensic psychology. He was a Senior Research Consultant with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Child Witness Project, from 1989 through 2006.



■ **Saywitz, K. J., & Camparo, L. B. (2009). Contemporary child forensic interviewing: Evolving consensus and innovation over 25 years. In. B. L. Bottoms, C. J. Najdowski, & G. S. Goodman (Eds.), *Children as Victims, Witnesses, and Offenders: Psychological Science and the Law* (pp.102-127). New York: The Guilford Press.**

The authors identified and discussed improvements in child forensic interviewing from the previous two decades, including protocols designed to accommodate children's developmental levels. They described advances in the infrastructure of interviewing for the same period and ended with a discussion and suggestions for moving into a holistic approach to research and practice.

Their approach to the topic was from a therapeutic standpoint, as clearly seen in the suggestions for further research. A comprehensive overview of the trends in interviewing based on empirical research for the period was provided and followed by a discussion of how the research derived protocols have been put into practice.

The protocols covered in depth included the Step-Wise Interview, the Cognitive Interview, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) investigative interview, the Narrative Elaboration procedure, and Finding Words. The article covered some core components of community response to child abuse allegations that have affected the context and infrastructure of forensic interviewing over the previous 20 years.

The authors found from both the research and the clinical literatures the clear value of differentiating between forensic interviews and clinical efforts. They also found that, during the 1980s, it was common during pretrial investigations for child witnesses to be repeatedly interviewed by multiple interviewers from various agencies such as law enforcement child protection, juvenile law, and mental health, each unaware of the other's activities, with no single agency taking responsibility for coordinating the process. Many interviewers were unaware of the dangers of using suggestive interviewing techniques with young children. Interviews occurred in a wide range of uncontrolled settings (e.g., schools, hospitals, courthouses, police stations, homes, cars, and cafeterias), lacking safeguards and objectivity necessary to minimize potential for false accusations. The authors completed this article with suggestions for a more holistic approach, including moving beyond just getting the facts and striving to meet mental health needs without tainting reports.

Karen J. Saywitz, PhD, is a developmental and clinical Psychologist who currently serves as professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Associate Director of TIES for Families in the Department of Pediatrics, UCLA School of Medicine. TIES for Families provides multidisciplinary services to families adopting children with special needs from the foster care system. She is an international expert on children involved in the legal system and has received awards for her pioneering research, teaching, and advocacy on children's mental health. Lorinda B. Camparo, PhD., is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Whittier College. Her research interests include the efficacy of techniques for interviewing children, adolescent friendships, and the development of prejudice and stereotypes in children and adolescents.