

REVIEWING CHILD FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

Key Points to Remember:

- Children's memory is reconstructive, not a recording device.
- Suggestibility and interviewer influence can distort a child's statements.
- Protocol compliance is critical for statement reliability.

Checklist for Reviewing Forensic Interviews

Preparation and context

- Was the interview video recorded in full?
- Was the interview conducted soon after the alleged incident?
- Were there previous interviews of the child? By whom?
- Did the child have previous conversations with adults or other alleged victims about the incident?
- Did the interviewer consider the developmental level of the child?

Interviewer Behavior

- Did the interviewer follow a protocol that meets Daubert standards?
- Did the interviewer deviate from the protocol?
- Were there multiple interviews? If so, were they needed?
- Was the interviewer neutral or did they expect a specific outcome?
- Were open- ended questions primarily used during the substantive phase?
- Were potentially leading or suggestive questions used?
- Did the interviewer introduce information about the allegation not known to the child?
- Were there repeated questions?
- Did the interviewer provide praise, reinforcement or pressure?
- Were potentially suggestive tools used (dolls, drawings)?
- Did the interviewer ask questions that explored alternative explanations?

Child's Responses

- Were responses spontaneous or prompted?
- Were there signs of adult language or coaching?
- Were there significant inconsistencies in statements?
- Did the child describe events that were implausible?