

## Issues Related to Interviewing

### Lies and Consequences:

Karen Saywitz and Tom Lyon have developed a task that makes truth-lie assessment as sensitive as possible. Available at: <http://hal-law.usc.edu/users/tlyon/articles/competency.PDF/>

They have found a number of ways in which interviewers may underestimate children's understanding of truth and lies by asking unnecessarily difficult questions. More information about this can be found at: <http://hal-law.usc.edu/users/tlyon>

For example, they have found that asking children to describe the consequences of lying to themselves hurts their performance (see the cite to the Law and Human behavior study, 2001). More recently, they've found that asking children to identify the interviewer's statements as truth or lies hurts performance, because children appear to be afraid to call the interviewer a liar (This research was presented at the Society Research in Development conference April 2005). There's a fair amount of research examining whether a truth lie discussion increases honesty, whether eliciting a promise to tell the truth increases honesty, and whether understanding of truth and lies is related to honesty. Note that these are clearly separate issues. Of course, all of the research is necessarily limited in applicability to interviewing about abuse, because researchers must create situations in which they know for sure what actually happened to the child, and can't create highly stressful situations simulating abuse.

Nevertheless, there's some evidence that a truth lie discussion increases accuracy. London, K., & Nunez, N. (2002). Examining the efficacy of truth/lie discussions in predicting and increasing the veracity of children's reports. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 83, 131-147.

London and Nunez didn't find any evidence that children's performance on the task \*predicted\* honesty (that is, children with a better understanding of truth and lies weren't more honest). Other research has similarly found that understanding of truth and lies isn't related to honesty, but that eliciting a promise to tell the truth increases honesty.

Talwar, V., et al. (2002). Children's conceptual knowledge of lying and its relation to their actual behaviors: Implications for court competence examinations. *Law & Human Behavior*, 26, 395-415. In a paper that is currently under review, Joyce Dorado and I found that a promise to tell the truth increased honesty in maltreated children. Unlike Talwar and London, however, we did find some evidence that children's understanding of the truth and lies was related to their honesty.

### Establishing Child Competency in Interviews:

-Lyon, Thomas D. and Saywitz, Karen J. "Young Maltreated Children's Competency to Take the Oath", *Applied Developmental Science*, 3, 1, 16-27.

-Lyon, Thomas D. and Saywitz, Karen J. "Qualifying Children To Take the Oath: Materials for Interviewing Professionals" available at: <http://lawweb.usc.edu/users/tlyon/>.

-Lyon, Thomas D. "[False Denials: Overcoming methodological Biases in Abuse Disclosure Research](#)", in M.E. Pipe, M.E. Lamb, Y. Orbach and A.C. Cederbord (Eds),

Disclosing Abuse: Delays, Denials, Retractions and Incomplete Accounts. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

-Lyon, T (2002) Scientific Support for Expert Testimony on Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation. In J.R. Conte (Ed), Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse, 107-138. Newbury Park, CA: Sage-presents a lot of information and supporting research for CSAAS and the process of disclosure

-London, et al, [Disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse: What Does the Research Tell Us About the Ways that Children Tell?](#) Psychology, Public Policy and Law, 2005-used by defense attorney to state the accommodation syndrome cannot be used in expert testimony to describe why a child may give a tentative disclosure during their forensic interview and they later disclose more

#### Forensic Interviews for Children with Delays:

-The Sexual Abuse Interview for Those with Developmental Disabilities, by Denise Valenti-Hein and Linda Schwartz

-Nora J. Baladerian, PhD is an interviewer disability specialist used by NCA. She has done some research and recently wrote a book and made a video. Contact information is: Phone is: 310-473-6768 or: [nora@disability-abuse.com](mailto:nora@disability-abuse.com) or [www.disability-abuse.com](http://www.disability-abuse.com).

#### Minimal Facts Interview:

- Pittsburg, KS has used a PowerPoint presentation as well as a [Minimal Facts Interview sheet](#) for first responders and school personnel. Focused at patrol officers but can be adapted to address the issue of too much interviewing if there is a disclosure at school.

-The CAC in Harrisburg, PA also has a [first responder's interview tool](#). For more information, please contact Debbie Bauer or Teresa Smith at The Children's Resource Center of Pinnacle Health in Harrisburg, PA, phone: 717-782-6800 or [tsmith@pinnaclehealth.org](mailto:tsmith@pinnaclehealth.org) or [dbauer@pinnaclehealth.org](mailto:dbauer@pinnaclehealth.org).

#### First Responder's Training:

The CAC in Lacey, WA conducts a first responder training each year they call "Now What?" as in, a child just made a disclosure, now what? They have an all-day training that includes a session on the dynamics of child sexual abuse (understanding offenders), a panel of our MDT members talking about how cases move through the system, a session on what it means to be a mandated reporter and how to make reports, and last year added one on internet predators. The agenda is attached, along with a couple of handouts. They also put in the Mandated Reporter law, the Darkness to Light 7 steps booklet, and any other information they have that they feel would be helpful. This has been pretty well received. They get 50 – 70 people at the training each year. For more information, contact: Maureen Fitzgerald, Director, Monarch Children's Justice & Advocacy Center, 420 Golf Club Rd SE, Suite 203, Lacey, WA 98503, (360) 923-1884 x101 or [maureenf@monarchchild.org](mailto:maureenf@monarchchild.org)