

## Interviewing the Child Sex Trafficking Victim

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### Overview

- Goals of the investigative interview
- Understanding the barriers to disclosure
- Child Sex Trafficking interview process
- How to address deception/ problem Interviews

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### Goals of the Interview

- Identify victimization for child's well being
- Determine if a crime has been committed
- Identify: "Corroborative evidence"

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**When victimization occurs but there's no "outcry"**

- No sex assault exam
- No victim services
- Suspect remains free to victimize
- Nothing changes

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**Process**

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**Process of Child Sex Trafficking Interview**

- Proper mindset
- Preparation
- Understanding of selection/grooming process for trafficking victims
- Understanding dynamics of adolescent behaviors within sex abuse setting
- Getting all the information and links

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## Mindset

- Recognize that child sex trafficking victims are prey for predators who chose them  
wisely/ rarely pay price  
Focus on adults behavior/ not child's
- ALL children deserve our expertise
- Share your mindset

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## Mindset

- Open minded
- Empathetic
- Patient
- Well trained, experienced
  - As in Forensic Interviewing field
- *Good Listener*
- But also, firm and well prepared, with as much information as possible

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## Preparation for the Interview

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### Preparation

- Get CPS history, all info available (officers, phones, criminal histories, data checks)
- Background investigation
- Never go in with nothing if possible
- Introduction
- Attend to hygiene/personal needs if necessary
- Ask about food/drink

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### Preparation

- Thorough understanding of detention
- Introduction
  - Distance from arrest/detention
  - Focus on “missing” not prostitution

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### Preparation

- Handling of this process demonstrates your attitude toward child/situation
- Our attitude can create immediate *barrier* if victim feels
  - Judged because of their conduct
  - Parental/Preachy tone
  - Insincerity

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## Preparation

- Scheduling Interview
  - When child has been returned home
  - Parent/Witness initiates investigation

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## Understanding Grooming

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## Grooming Dynamics

- Picking the right victim
  - Detect vulnerability
    - ◆ Traditional-Easy access, through job, proximity; coach, teacher, minister, family friend, neighbor
    - ◆ Pimp-Easy access because of runaway/throwaway status
  - Sensitive to Emotional state
    - ◆ *You seem sad, you're going through a lot*
    - ◆ *I can take care of you, give you things*
      - Create understanding/special relationship

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## Grooming Dynamics

- Picking the right victim
  - Sensitive to Emotional state/Create "special" relationship
    - ◆ Pimp- *"Your family doesn't care about you, I can be your family" "We can build this business together and make a lot of money"*
    - ◆ Pimp has added power in providing basic essentials and having constant contact with victim

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## Grooming Dynamics

- Picking the right victim
  - Much easier to hurt someone if you help them first

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## Victim Behaviors

- Understanding dynamics of adolescent behaviors within sex abuse setting
  - Long term abuse situations start slowly and positively (gifts, shelter)
  - Often when abuse starts child is confused and ashamed
  - This state allows the abuse to continue with the child appearing to some to be compliant

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## Child Sex Trafficking Interview Process

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## Interview Process

- Rapport
- Starting Point- first and last runaway
- Why?

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## Interview Process

- Inviting narrative
  - Build on runaway issue, why is she running away?
  - Allow child to "frame positively" if they wish
    - ◆ Where have you been staying?
    - ◆ Have they been taking care of you?
    - ◆ Have they forced you to do anything?
    - ◆ Who's working?
    - ◆ How are the bills getting paid

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## Interview Process

- When Trafficking is revealed
  - Assure victim that many young girls fall prey to pimp “scam”
  - Victim has nothing to be ashamed of
  - Relieve pressure on victim if possible

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## Interview Process

- Focus on boyfriend/older friend?
  - Get as much information as possible without covering abuse related questions
- Do not rush abuse questions
- Indirect approach

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## How to Address Deception

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## Understanding the Deception

- What kind of lie?
  - Malicious?
  - Protection?

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## Understanding the Deception (cont.)

- Why would a victim lie to protect the pimp/bottom girl?
- Why would a victim lie in accusing a pimp/bottom girl?

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## Getting all the information

- Linking the info
  - Different interviewers, usually bad idea
  - Computers, phones, motel registrations, videos, computers.....
  - Preservation Letters

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## Getting all the information

- Age issue- Always ask  
"mistake of age is not a defense"  
jury nullification- Age Investigation in Corroboration piece
- Explore grooming techniques
- Info to corroborate
  - Search warrant
  - One party consent phone call
  - Phone records, hotel records, fake IDs

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## What's our response?

- Are you going to tell my parents/mom/family?
  - I'll tell you if you won't tell my mom
  - I don't want to press charges/cooperate

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## Testifying About the Interview

- Defense may attack the interview/process
- Give reason for multiple interviews
  - Different from traditional interviews
    - ◆ Explain the deception, inconsistencies
    - ◆ Compare to DV
    - ◆ Incest
    - ◆ Authority Figure

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## Testifying About the Interview

- Progressive Disclosures

The detailed, full disclosure needed to determine credibility cannot always be obtained in one or two interviews, even if the child is interviewed by experienced and knowledgeable investigators. Research and experience indicate that children often deny abuse in initial interviews (Bourg, et.al., 1999; Berliner, L. & Conte, J., 1993). Article written by Ethel Amacher, M.S.W., L.C.S.W. "Extended Assessment of the Child Victim"

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## Testifying About the Interview

- Progressive Disclosures

- Usually a term used to describe "therapy" situation.

- *Document each and every contact thoroughly for court purposes*

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## Court Considerations

- If child is or has been in placement, jail, counseling since interview, work with DA investigator to get *all records* regarding assessments, additional interviews, etc. Better to know what's been said before trial.

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## Conclusion of Interview

- Give the child an opportunity to ask questions
- Thank the child for talking
- Goal is to have the child leave in a positive frame of mind

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