

ADVANCED PRACTICE IN FORENSIC INTERVIEWING OF CHILDREN TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS



NEW EVIDENCE-BASED ONLINE CURRICULUM LEADS THE WAY

ABOUT THE TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Since its inception in 1985, CCAA has had a commitment to providing new and innovative forensic child interview training for police officers and child protection workers. In keeping with our tradition of offering "cutting edge", well-researched training, the CCAA has a formal contract with the Centre for Investigative Interviewing at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia to collaboratively offer the first international evidence-based online training for interviewers."

This fully online course is designed for any professional who conducts or supervises investigative interviews with children, particularly interviews about alleged child abuse. The course focuses on the elicitation of narrative detail from children. Topics include choosing effective questions, eliciting reliable disclosures of abuse and tailoring interview techniques to the needs of individual children. Strategies for working with children from cultural minority groups and with complex communication needs are covered. The course also addresses the requirements of prosecution and the degree to which certain evidential details need to be clarified or followed up.

Trainees progress through the modules at their own pace and receive a certificate on completion. The Centre for Investigative Interviewing has developed this course over a 10 year period. The course's continual evolution has been informed by the Centre's rigorous and ongoing evaluations to ensure it is evidence-based and highly practical. It includes innovative interactive computer exercises, which have been demonstrated in empirical research to promote adherence to best-practice (narrative based) interviewing. Each module also includes films (made by a professional film maker) that illustrate aspects of child development and interviewer skills, quizzes (where instant feedback on performance is provided), practical readings, and mock interview exercises (conducted with a tutor or a virtual child).

PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE FORENSIC TRAINING IN THE INVESTIGATION OF CHILD ABUSE

- n Emphasizing a joint multidisciplinary approach to investigation.
- n Building further investigation skills by adapting the investigation to the complexities of abusive families and recent research.
- n Structuring training materials to use a competency-based approach to activities that will build on the investigator's existing skill set.
- n Utilizing dynamic, engaging instructors with significant expertise in their field.
- n Offering knowledge relevant to work situations with results that can be immediately applied.

A preliminary evaluation conducted by the Centre for Investigative Interviewing has shown six important findings:

- 1) The proportion of open-ended questions utilized by interviewers has significantly increased, while the proportion of specific and leading questions have significantly decreased.
- 2) The length of interviews has significantly reduced.
- 3) There is no significant decrease in the elicitation of essential information (i.e., identification of the offender, location and time of abuse, the nature of the offence, possible witnesses and physical evidence) in field interviews.
- 4) Interviewers are successfully adhering to the narrative-based protocol in field interviews.
- 5) Interviewers have shown a significant improvement in the amount of positive "behaviours" or techniques displayed in interviews (e.g., using minimal encouragers, avoiding asking developmentally inappropriate questions).
- 6) Improvements in performance were well maintained over time, long after the training program had ceased.



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