

Introduction to New Series by Major Trainers About Child Forensic Interview Training Programs

Erna Olafson, PhD, PsyD

Cincinnati Children's Hospital and University of Cincinnati Medical School

A variety of child forensic interview training programs are now available for new and established advocacy centers and multidisciplinary teams throughout the United States and elsewhere. The *APSAC Advisor* has invited major trainers to describe their programs and to explain the rationales for their investigation and training approaches. In response to the list of 14 questions, which the *Advisor* sent to established training programs, Lori S. Holmes and Victor I. Vieth of the American Prosecutors Research Institute *Finding Words/Half a Nation* trainings describe their program for this issue. In the next issue of the *APSAC Advisor*, Raymond Broderick overviews the training programs developed in Oregon and published by Sage Publications as *A Child Interviewer's Guidebook* (Bourg, Broderick, Flagor, Kelly, Ervin, & Butler, 1999). Papers have also been invited from Patti Toth of the APSAC Advanced Interview Clinics and from Mark Everson, Kathleen Coulborn Faller, Sandra K. Hewitt, Julie Kenniston, Michael E. Lamb, and Debra A. Poole. Thomas D. Lyon has offered to write an overview of current child forensic interview approaches and training issues once this series nears completion.

The *Finding Words* and Oregon trainings represent two of the earliest programs developed. CornerHouse in Minneapolis began teaching a 5-day, child sexual abuse forensic training course in 1990. With some modifications, the CornerHouse interview and training model has formed the basis for APRI's *Finding Words* project. The Oregon program was also among the earliest trainings to develop and disseminate a curriculum. These two pioneering programs differ in some respects; CornerHouse teaches a semistructured interview approach, and Oregon teaches flexible guidelines. Programs by Michael Lamb and others, to be described in subsequent *Advisor* issues, teach structured protocols, and some programs, such as the Childhood Trust's Forensic Institute and the APSAC Interview Clinics, offer trainees a choice between flexible guidelines and structured protocols.

The variety of approaches in child forensic interviewing reflects the current state of knowledge in this developing field. It is important to emphasize in this survey that there is no single child forensic interview model or protocol that must be used in order to be forensically defensible. Structured interview protocols that guide interviewers to ask open questions in order to invite free recall narratives from children are solidly grounded in the research, but in the real world of child interviewing, flexible guidelines can also be necessary. Further, trainers are learning more about effective skills building and the importance of ongoing peer review and supervision to maintain interviewer skills at an optimal level.

It is in this collaborative spirit that APSAC is currently sponsoring a Think Tank by major trainers from around the United States to develop a procedure to evaluate videotaped interviews of children.

As distinct protocols and training models have developed in regional and national programs, the field of child forensic interviewing has been distinguished by a uniquely open and collaborative spirit. Major trainers communicate freely with each other, sharing information, resources, and training tips

and often teaching in more than one program. It is in this collaborative spirit that APSAC is currently sponsoring a Think Tank by major trainers from around the United States to develop a procedure to evaluate videotaped interviews of children. And it is also in this spirit of collaboration that the *Advisor* commences this series of papers for the free exchange of information about how best to train child interviewers for the purposes of child welfare and justice in the courts.



CALL FOR PAPERS

Purpose: The *APSAC ADVISOR*, a quarterly publication of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, serves as a forum for succinct, practice-oriented articles and features that keep interdisciplinary professionals informed of current developments in the field of child maltreatment. *ADVISOR* readers are the more than 2,500 social workers, physicians, attorneys, psychologists, law enforcement officers, researchers, judges, educators, administrators, psychiatrists, nurses, counselors, and other professionals who are members and supporters of APSAC.

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Submission: All articles should be typed and double-spaced in 12-point type on 8.5 x 11 inch white paper, and submitted with an accompanying disk in Microsoft Word plus a brief cover letter indicating that the article is offered for publication in the *APSAC ADVISOR*. The *ADVISOR* uses the manuscript format set forth in the latest edition of the style manual of the American Psychological Association.

Please send unsolicited manuscripts to:
Erna Olafson, PhD
Editor-in-Chief, APSAC Advisor
Dept. of Psychiatry ML0539
University of Cincinnati Medical School
Cincinnati, OH 45267

About the Contributors

Lori S. Holmes, MA, LISW

Lead Training Coordinator at CornerHouse, an Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center Located in Minneapolis, MN

Louanne Lawson, PhD, RN

Assistant Professor in the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Nursing

Erna Olafson, PhD, PsyD

Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Pediatrics, Cincinnati Children's Hospital and the University of Cincinnati Medical School

Shelia Savell, RN, MSN

Registered nurse and doctoral student at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Victor I. Vieth, JD

Director of the American Prosecutors Research Institute's National Center for Prosecutors of Child Abuse

ABOUT APSAC: APSAC is a nonprofit interdisciplinary membership organization incorporated in 1987. Thousands of professionals from all over the world—attorneys, child protective services workers, law enforcement personnel, nurses, physicians, researchers, teachers, psychologists, clergy, and administrators—have joined APSAC's effort to ensure that everyone affected by child maltreatment receives the best possible professional response.