

# APSAC's Position on Forensic Interviewer Certification

The APSAC Board has been gathering information on the question of professional certification of forensic interviewers. Throughout this process, the Board has sought insights from professionals across the country. In an effort to gather this information, we asked, Should APSAC support certification of forensic interviewers? The question assumed and was clearly framed in such a way that any certification program considered would be based on research and evidence-based practice. This resulted in a rich conversation among professionals both supporting and not supporting certification of forensic interviewers. The input has been extremely helpful.

For clarification, the child forensic interview is the neutral fact-finding investigative interview conducted in child abuse and other cases in which violence is witnessed. There are several national and state training models that provide information and training on how to conduct these interviews.

Professional certification is akin to licensing. Both are based primarily on rigorous psychometric testing and other empirically-supported eligibility requirements. Principal differences are that professional certification is nongovernmental and voluntary, whereas licensing is governmental and nonvoluntary. Certification, as a method of promoting worker competence and public safety, has strong theoretical and historical legitimacy when properly implemented, for appropriate populations, at the right time in a profession's developmental history.

There has been much discussion over the last several years among APSAC membership regarding the development of a certification program for forensic interviewers. In January 2009, APSAC established a subcommittee to research the issue of certification of forensic interviewers and to recommend an official APSAC position. APSAC has worked diligently over the last several months to engage members in fact finding and discussion.

At the September 21, 2010, Board meeting, the following APSAC position regarding the professional certification of forensic interviewers was adopted:

When properly implemented with appropriate populations, at the right time in their developmental history, professional certification, as a method of promoting worker competence, has a strong theoretical and historical legitimacy. The practice area of forensic interviewing has evolved to a point that an empirically-based universe of core competencies could be identified to underpin consensus training, guidelines, and professional certification. The development of consensus, empirically-based training of core competencies and forensic interviewer guidelines should precede any attempt to finalize professional certification for forensic interviewers.

Proper legal, administrative, and governance structure would be essential for any organization providing professional certification for forensic interviewers. This would include, but not be limited to, nonprofit status, a board governance structure that assures proper professional representation, and adherence to the guidelines of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence.

Irrespective of the general legitimacy of professional certification for forensic interviewers, there are context-specific issues regarding its effects on various professions that have not been appropriately researched. Research regarding potential negative repercussions should be assessed before a decision is made whether to proceed with professional certification of forensic interviewers.

APSAC believes that more research and development are needed before it can support a professional certification initiative of forensic interviewers.

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