



# ChildFirst®

The Forensic Interviewing Newsletter of the National Child Protection Training Center

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### Talking with Teens...Really? Is that in my Job Description?

By Rita Johnson<sup>1</sup>



#### Introduction

As a forensic interviewer, I know firsthand how difficult it is to sit in a room with a child and conduct a forensic interview. Many challenges can arise during an interview because each child is different, each circumstance is different and each conversation is different. We are usually talking about difficult topics for a child to ever discuss and we must conduct the interview in a way that is both non-leading and defensible. Most interviewers will define the most difficult interviews to conduct as those being with very young children<sup>2</sup> and teenagers. There are specific challenges a forensic interviewer must address with both age groups. Much research can be found for interviewing very young children, but there is little research when it comes to interviewing teenagers. With the lack of research on interviewing teenage/adolescent victims of abuse, this article will focus on my experience of more than ten years interviewing and working with teenagers and discussions I have had over the years with other professionals experienced in interviewing this age group.

In addition to the lack of research, there is also a significant lack of training available to forensic interviewers for interviewing teenagers. Although forensic interviewing of children and adolescents has become an accepted expertise within the judicial system and a specialized field of practice,<sup>3</sup> few trainings exist that prepare interviewers for the specific challenges of talking with teenagers. The guidelines for conducting a child interview in most jurisdictions focus on the younger child with little focus on adolescent age children. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has one training program that discusses interviewing "Compliant Adolescent Victims."<sup>4</sup> However, this training is limited to individuals within the FBI. Forensic interviewers need to understand how to adjust the guidelines and techniques utilized and understand the importance of the elements that may be involved with allegations of sexual abuse with the adolescent age group.

This article will focus on two areas of interviewing teenagers. First, the article will address technology and the integral role it plays in a teenager's life. Simply stated, forensic interviewers need to understand the different types of technologies available to teenagers and how this technology impacts the interview. Second, the article will explore tools and tips interviewers can use when interviewing older children. Forensic interviewers need to understand the life of this teenager and how he or she views and communicates within his or her society. Interviewers need practical tools to assist with asking questions and responding to teenage victims.



## Research on adolescent/teenage victims

In reviewing the research available on adolescent age children, specific to interviewing, many articles define the adolescent victims as compliant. Ken Lanning said he used the word compliant because he couldn't think of a better word.<sup>5</sup> It is my experience that teenagers who are involved with sexual abuse crimes, especially those involving some type of technology, are not "compliant" but rather unaware of how their actions, behaviors and habits can make them easy targets for the perpetrators. This is a logical result of their age and lack of maturity, as well as their lack of forethought on how technology can facilitate/complicate the sexual abuse encounter, either by enabling contact with someone the child might not otherwise have come into contact with and/or by proliferating the abuse to an audience that would never have been anticipated, or intended, by the victim. David Finkelhor noted that children cannot consent because often they do not understand what it is that they are consenting to and do not have the power to say "no" (the basis of informed consent). The very idea that children would, could, or should be allowed to consent to sexual contact with older persons is deeply troubling.<sup>6</sup>

## The importance of understanding technology

Adolescents today live in a world where all of their information, conversations, communications and lives can be put on-line for all to see; sometimes this is done even without their knowledge. Teenagers today don't remember a time with land-line telephones, black and white TVs and a world without computers. They don't remember when communicating meant actually looking face-to-face at

the person with whom they are communicating or, at the very least, talking with them on the phone. Most of today's teenagers have always had a cell phone, at least close by if not a personal one, and their communication is much different because they text instead of calling; they twitter, email or get on-line to chat. Their technological world creates a significantly different and much more impersonal way of communicating than that of most forensic interviewers. Teenagers get on-line or twitter to keep up with what is happening with their peers and to share what is happening with them. They don't leave voice messages on cell phones; if they don't get an answer, they just text. Having two teenage boys of my own, I have been immersed in the "new communication" of teenagers. As much as I would love to have hour-long telephone conversations with them, they are much more likely to contact me multiple times a day by texting to stay in touch. If they call me and I don't answer my cell phone, they will not leave a message. Does this sound familiar? Their definition of communication is much different than adults', as most teenagers grew up with this technology as part of their daily routine.

This typology of teenager "communication" significantly challenges the forensic interview. A forensic interview is a fact-finding conversation conducted in a developmentally sensitive manner that is both non-leading and defensible. Talking with a teenager face-to-face in a child advocacy center, often times about difficult topical matters, takes the teenager out of his or her comfort zone with regards to communication. It is much easier to communicate via a computer, cell phone or by twittering. The forensic interviewer must have a clear understanding of the communication differences and the unique challenges this creates in order to successfully communicate with a teenager. A perfect example of this is an adult asking a teenager about talking with her cousin. The teenager answered the adult by saying "No, I haven't talked with my cousin today." Later in the conversation the teenager mentioned her cousin and the adult responded, "I thought you hadn't talked with your cousin today!" The

teenager responded, "Oh, I have texted her all day, but I haven't talked with her on my cell." This teenager did not feel she had "talked" with her cousin because they were texting. Understanding the communication differences will help the forensic interviewer better phrase questions to receive more accurate information from the teenage victims.

Another example is an interview I conducted recently with a teen involving alleged sexual abuse. During the interview, as I was establishing rapport, the teen talked about her friends. In my questioning, I explored the ways in which she communicated with her friends. The teenager primarily communicated via texting and Facebook. As a forensic interviewer, that was my opportunity to explore this communication. Asking questions about the technology allowed the teenager to start discussing the communication with the alleged perpetrator. If I had not explored the technology the child routinely used in her communication with her peers, the teenager may not have felt comfortable discussing the technology that was used to facilitate the abuse.





Technological advances and how they impact a teenager's thinking and behavior are important factors for the forensic interviewer. In looking at the research conducted by Lippert, et al.,<sup>7</sup> and Goodman-Brown<sup>8</sup> regarding children's ages at the time of the forensic interview, it was found that older children who disclosed to police or social services (which may have occurred outside the context of a forensic interview and at various locations, including school or home) waited longer to do so than younger children. The authors indicated "this delay [was at least partially] explained by their feeling more responsibility for the abuse and being more fearful of negative consequences ... as a result of disclosure."<sup>9</sup> Many articles have been written about the Internet, Internet safety, Internet crimes and how education and prevention programs can assist with keeping our children safe. Technology is a part of every facet of a teenager's life, from communicating with their peers; seeing what is going on in their community, school, homework, and reports; and events and entertainment such as games, music, viewing movies. In many ways, teenagers utilize technology as a "life-line" to the world.

Forensic interviewers need to understand the way perpetrators groom potential teenage victims. Often the grooming will involve the use of some form of technology. Adolescents easily fall prey to the grooming process of

online predators who appeal to their need to be "special" and "mature."<sup>10</sup> Teens often know the significant age difference of the person with whom they are chatting and, perhaps, send pictures to, but this does not change their behavior. Rarely are the online predators required to use threats or deception to lure their teenage victims.<sup>11</sup> Some of the technology that may be an important factor to consider during the forensic interview include: Internet, texting, social networks like Facebook and MySpace, cell phone, twitter, digital photography, iPods, Skype, video conference, web cams and avatars, just to name a few. This is an area that is constantly evolving. The article, "Online Dangers: Keeping Children and Adolescents Safe" is a good tool for understanding specific online dangers accessible to our children.<sup>12</sup>

### Tools and tips for interviewing teenagers

Many investigators may believe teenage victims may be too "old" for a child advocacy center environment and choose to interview them at the local police department, school or other location. Environment is critical for any age victim. The environment that a child advocacy center can provide will greatly benefit all minors. Professionals should carefully consider the benefits and the importance of the environment when conducting forensic interviews. The judicial scrutiny given to forensic interviews often includes the potential influence, suggestiveness or possible coercive nature of the environment.

One important factor for all child advocacy centers is to consider the room, the actual physical environment, where an adolescent is interviewed. The area needs to have age appropriate furniture and decorations for teenage victims. If the center is geared only toward the small child, many adolescents will feel uncomfortable talking with a forensic interviewer in a room they feel is "too young" for them. Adolescent victims already have fears and beliefs that they are and will be misunderstood by the interviewer while often still seeing the perpetrator as someone who "understands" them. If an interview is attempted in a room or environment that tends to align him or her with the small child, a teenager

may feel insulted and another unnecessary block will be created for the interviewer. Make sure your CAC includes an area with teen appropriate reading materials, books, magazines, and games.

During interviews of teenage victims, a forensic interviewer should have a clear understanding of the cognitive, emotional and social development of the teen. Depending on where the teen is in development, the interviewer needs to meet him there. The life experiences of the forensic interviewers will be much different than that of the adolescents they are interviewing, regardless of the age of the forensic interviewers. Communication needs to be defined. Teenagers will assume the forensic interviewers understand and know the terminology they are using during the interview. All interviewers should clarify any terminology or words used by the teenager that could have multiple meanings. Even when the words would seem to be understandable to both, clarification is essential. An example of the importance of clarification occurred during an interview I conducted with a 15 year old victim. When the report came into the child advocacy center, investigators indicated I would be talking with a teenager about alleged sexual abuse after the child had disclosed to her friend about having "sex" with a teacher. After beginning the interview, the teenager appeared very comfortable talking with me and sharing the events surrounding the alleged sexual contact. The teen indicated her teacher had "sex" with her. When the girl paused, I said, "Sex means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. What does "sex" mean to you?" The child responded, "Sex is when someone kisses you and puts their tongue in your mouth." This example demonstrates how crucial it is to make sure all terms - especially those critical to a determination of what, if any, sexual abuse may have occurred are clarified. A good forensic interviewer will strive never to go into any interview with preconceived ideas or assumptions. The role of a forensic interviewer is to be neutral and objective to all situations and have conversations with the children they talk to that enable children to accurately report what may have happened to them.

Attempts at clarification may also be a block for the interviewer if not done correctly. The forensic interviewer does not want to give teens a feeling of “talking down” to them when clarifying the terminology the adolescent uses. Many teen victims will say during an interview, “You know what I mean!” or something similar in response to a clarifying question. The adolescent child often will look at an interviewer as if she has two heads when the interviewer starts asking the adolescent to define sexual terms. The interviewer must be able to make sure the teen understands why clarification is necessary without making the teen feel uncomfortable or defensive. It is also important not to try to appear “hip” (a term not used by today’s teens). It is far better to ask questions to be sure that all terms are clear than to assume or pretend you understand what the teen is saying; accuracy is essential for the investigators who will be preparing warrants to seize items of technology for possible corroboration.

Another important aspect of any interview with a teenager and his non-offending caregivers is defining how the teen communicates with his peers, family, etc. By including this conversation in your interview, you allow for the opportunity to introduce technology into the interview. All interviewers need to discuss and explore the technology world of the teenager. The teen’s access to technology needs to be explored with reference to that which is available through friends and within the home, school, and other environments which the teen frequents. Having this discussion will not only enhance our own understanding of how the teen communicates, but provides invaluable potential avenues to pursue corroborating evidence of any crimes that may have been committed. The interviewer’s priority must be to ask questions that increase and enhance the responses of a teenager.

Just as forensic interviewers are responsible for understanding developmental issues of younger children, we must undertake to study and understand adolescent development: How are teens different? What special blocks exist for them? Much research has been done on adolescent development. We need to especially focus on the development

issues that may impact the forensic interview. Most of the above mentioned reasons for not wanting to disclose have a lot to do with development. Teens feel they are independent and invincible, may be rebellious, have encountered resistance from adults, are trying to find their voice and figure out who they are. At the same time they are dealing with immense peer pressure issues, feeling misunderstood by the “world” and have massive physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes happening all at once. Teens want to make their own decisions. As they continue to develop, they attempt to begin more “adult-like” activities: driving; getting part-time jobs; having additional freedom to make their own decisions and control their own time. But with all of these changes also comes some dangers for which they are not developmentally equipped. Understanding risks and consequences is particularly impaired in adolescence.

Keeping in mind all of these developmental storms going on within the teen, forensic interviewers must craft their questions with particular care. One example of a question often utilized by forensic interviewers during an adolescent interview is, “Do you know why you are here today?” This question for many interviewers is a transition statement to get from one part of the interview to another. As phrased, an overly sensitive teen might see this as a trick question or signal of a condescending attitude on the part of the interviewer. Most teenagers know why they are being interviewed and expect the interviewer knows as well. A more appropriate question for a teen might be, “What do you know about coming here today?” or “Let’s talk about why you are here today.” Because most teenagers understand “why” they are being interviewed, an interviewer needs to recognize possible “secondary” reasons why a teenager may not want to talk about what has happened. For most teenagers, the abuse itself is something they are intellectually able to discuss. However, blocks may occur when the teen, who is developmentally able to understand the potential consequences of his or her disclosure, may fear getting into trouble with his or her parents for engaging in other peripheral activities (drinking, using drugs, etc.) while the abuse was

occurring. Research (and common sense) shows that children do lie.<sup>13</sup> Children generally lie to “stay out of trouble.” With teenagers, we often hear they are not telling the truth or making the allegations up. Teenagers or child victims of any age generally do not make up lies about sexual abuse. Many children have an increased fear of additional punishment - to themselves or others - for actions that resulted in sexual abuse. Teenagers feel more responsible and have more shame in sexual abuse cases. These “secondary” circumstances can raise doubt about elements of a true disclosure when really the teenager is not being untruthful about the “abuse” but more likely is masking details out of concern for the secondary potential punishment. An interviewer must make every effort to assess and allay the fears of the child by sorting out what those fears may be, reassuring the child appropriately and making sure individuals responsible for the safety of the child are aware of the child’s concerns and fears. When teenagers identify with the interviewer, have a good rapport with that person and feel safe, they are more likely to share the details of the abuse without letting the secondary reasons block the progress of their disclosure. During a recent interview with a teenager, the teen told me that she was fearful of getting in trouble with her dad. I asked her to tell me more about that and she told me she was more afraid of getting in trouble for letting the perpetrator into her room. She said her dad is very strict and she was afraid he wouldn’t believe her about what happened because she had let the perpetrator in her room. Forensic interviewers need to consider the “secondary” reasons and how they can affect the disclosure process.





Three particularly difficult interviews for forensic interviewers may involve interviewing the defiant, angry teen, a teen that is in “love” with the abuser, and a male adolescent victim.

### ***The defiant, angry teenager***

The defiant, angry teen may feel threatened or be acutely aware of the consequences and may become defensive or angry towards the interviewer. In this circumstance, the interviewer needs to communicate to the teen that he is there to understand what happened. Asking the teen questions about what the interviewer is observing from the teen may assist in explaining why there is anger. It is acceptable for the interviewer to ask about the anger. It is crucial that the interviewer address the anger before moving on with the interview. An interviewer must try remain as calm and neutral as possible and at the same time make sure the teen knows he or she is not being judged.

Recently, I interviewed an autistic 14 year old male victim that was very angry. Because of his developmental considerations, he was unable to control his feelings. As he was disclosing the abuse, he was standing over me rocking back and forth and appeared frustrated. I will admit, there was a time in which I was concerned he would hit me, but I remained calm and let him continue talking. It was his way of communicating, but it was very intimidating. I listened and responded in a calm, quiet voice to lessen the intensity of the conversation. I also used his words which made him feel that I understood how he felt. With any angry teen, you must assess if at any time the interview should end due to safety concerns. One interviewer told me she was hit during an interview. Clearly, any type of physical aggression displayed by the teen should end the interview.

### ***Interviewing the teen who is “in love” with an abuser***

Whether in a relationship that the teen feels is appropriate or a caregiver/family member they love, the interview can be problematic. These interviews are often the most difficult because the teenager will not want the abuser to get into trouble. The interviewer needs to communicate his or her role in talking with the teen is to “understand” what has happened, not to make decisions. Interviewers must always be honest with all children they interview, but it is particularly important with teens. If the teen feels the interviewer is not being truthful, the teen will close down and not respond. It is key in these interviews to be as matter-of-fact as possible and never appear judgmental. Most likely, the teen is aware that others do not view this relationship favorably and will shut down if she receives this vibe from the interviewer. A neutral tone, however, may permit the teen to try to “explain” why this relationship is acceptable and beneficial from the teen’s point of view.

### ***Interviewing the adolescent male victim***

Interviewing the adolescent male victim can be another challenge for interviewers. Depending on the specific details of the abuse, male victims may feel uncomfortable talking with a female interviewer or a male interviewer. Anecdotally, there is rarely a correlation between genders of victim to interviewer in establishing rapport. In my opinion, talking with the male teen about who he would feel most comfortable talking to is appropriate. If a victim would feel more comfortable talking with another member of my team based on gender, that is who should interview the teen. Graduates of *ChildFirst*<sup>®</sup> forensic interviewing courses should always remember the “child first doctrine.”<sup>14</sup> The interviewers need to be comfortable asking about what they are observing from the teen because that is crucial for the interview to progress. Often times just bringing up the alternatives available to the teen and letting him make the decision will make the interview more productive. Special considerations may need to be addressed regarding any concerns the teen may have about his sexuality as it relates to the abuse. The forensic

interviewer needs to be comfortable talking about these topics as they come up during the interview. The interview should not become a counseling session, but it should allow the teen to state his concerns and allow the interviewer to assess what options might be offered to assist in addressing the concerns.

### ***The top ten list***

Why is it more difficult for forensic interviewers to talk with teen victims? The shock, shame and stigma attached to being a victim of crime makes it difficult for even adults to report their victimization. Teens face many additional obstacles: many teens may lack understanding of what they have experienced; fear no one will believe them; fear being blamed or punished; have feelings of guilt, shame or self-blame; fear retaliation; maintain mistrust of adults; believe nothing will be done; lack knowledge about available services; lack access to services; and have concerns about perceived and real limits of confidentiality.<sup>15</sup>



Below, is a top ten list for forensic interviewers to consider when interviewing teenagers:

1. Clarify all communication and terminology
2. Build rapport
3. With all age groups, but specifically with teens, understand their world
4. Use the teenager's words and vocabulary
5. Explore all alternative hypotheses
6. Don't interrupt
7. Ask about technology in every interview
8. Show an understanding of their age and that you are interested in what they have to say
9. Consider and explore "secondary" reasons for non-disclosure
10. Listen

## Conclusion

The process of interviewing teenagers requires appropriate training and an understanding of adolescent behavior, development and their world. Because there is an increase of teenagers requiring forensic interviews, forensic interviewers need to understand how to adapt the guidelines, protocols and techniques they have learned, and understand the importance of the elements that may be involved with allegations of sexual abuse with the adolescent age group.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Forensic Interview Specialist, National Child Protection Training Center, Southern Regional Center, Northwest Arkansas Community College.
- <sup>2</sup> See generally, Victor Vieth (2005 & 2006), When the victim is very young: Assessing allegations of sexual abuse in pre-school children. *Reasonable Efforts*, 2(4) & 3(1).
- <sup>3</sup> *State v. Douglas*, 671 S.E.2d 606, 609 n.2 (S.C. 2009) (enumerating state court decisions recognizing field of forensic interviewing).
- <sup>4</sup> Kenneth V. Lanning (2002). A law enforcement perspective on the compliant child victim. *The APSAC Advisor*, 14(2), 4-9.
- <sup>5</sup> Lanning, p. 4.
- <sup>6</sup> Jon R. Conte (2002). A therapist's perspective on the compliant child victim. *The APSAC Advisor*, 15(2), 13-15. See also David Finkelhor (1979). What's wrong with sex between adults and children? *American Journal of*

*Orthopsychiatry*, 49(4), 692-697.

- <sup>7</sup> Tonya Lippert, Theodore P. Cross, Lisa Jones, Wendy Walsh (2009). Telling interviewers about sexual abuse: Predictors of child disclosure at forensic interviews. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(1), 100-113.
- <sup>8</sup> Goodman-Brown, T. B., Edelstein, R. S., Goodman, G. S., Jones, D. P. H. & Gordon, D. S. (2003). Why children tell: A model of children's disclosure of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 27, 525-540.
- <sup>9</sup> Lippert, et al., p. 102.
- <sup>10</sup> Catherine S. Connell & Martha J. Finnegan (May 2010). Interviewing compliant adolescent victims. *Federal Bureau of Investigation Bulletin*. Retrieved from [http://www2.fbi.gov/publications/leb/2010/may2010/interviewing\\_feature.htm](http://www2.fbi.gov/publications/leb/2010/may2010/interviewing_feature.htm).
- <sup>11</sup> Janis Wolak, David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell & Michele L. Ybarra (2008). Online "predators" and their victims: Myths, realities, and implications for prevention and treatment. *American Psychologist*, 63(2), 111-128.
- <sup>12</sup> Jodi L. Whitaker & Brad J. Bushman (2009). Online dangers: Keeping children and adolescents safe. *Washington & Lee Law Review*, 66, 1053-63.
- <sup>13</sup> Stephen J. Ceci & Maggie Bruck (1993). *Psychological Bulletin* 113(3), 403-39. Suggestibility of the child witness: a historical review and synthesis.
- <sup>14</sup> This doctrine of forensic interviewing states, "The child is our first priority. Not the needs of the family. Not the child's 'story.' Not the evidence. Not the needs of the courts. Not the needs of the police, child protection, attorneys, etc. The child is our first priority." CornerHouse and National Child Protection Training Center (2010). *ChildFirst*® Training Manual. Minnesota: Authors.
- <sup>15</sup> Julie Whitman, et al. (2005). *Reaching and Serving Teen Victims: A Practical Handbook* (p. 1). Washington, D.C.: National Crime Prevention Council.



## CornerHouse Advanced Forensic Interview Training

This training is open to law enforcement, child protection investigators, prosecutors, and forensic interviewers who have completed the required prerequisites. This course teaches advanced forensic interviewing issues, modifies the interview protocol for physical abuse and other violent crimes, outlines research on memory and suggestibility, provides a mock cross-examination demonstration, and provides participants the opportunity to learn and utilize a video-recorded interview assessment tool to critique their own interviews.

### PREREQUISITES

1. Completion of one of the following basic interviewing courses:
  - CornerHouse Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training or On-Site Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training
  - *ChildFirst*®
  - Finding Words™
  - First Witness™
2. Completion of a minimum of fifteen (15) interviews using RATAAC® (requirement waived for prosecutors)

### OPENINGS

Advanced course at CornerHouse in Minneapolis, MN:

February 22-25, 2011  
April 26-29, 2011  
November 29-December 2, 2011

Advanced On-Site course at your facility:

July 20-July 22, 2011  
September 14-16, 2011  
November 29-December 2, 2011  
December 12-14, 2011

### REGISTRATION

Please contact Sandy Heitkamp at (612) 813-8310 or [sandra.heitkamp@childrensmn.org](mailto:sandra.heitkamp@childrensmn.org)

**CornerHouse**  
Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation & Training Center  
2502 10th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
612.813.8300  
[www.cornerhousemn.org](http://www.cornerhousemn.org)

# ChildFirst® State Training Calendar 2011\*

## ARKANSAS

March 7-11, June 7-11, October 3-7

## CONNECTICUT

April 11-15, October 17-21

## DELAWARE

April 11-15, October 3-7

## GEORGIA

March 14-18, May 9-13, September 12-16

## INDIANA

February 7-11, July 18-22, October 24-28

## ILLINOIS

October 3-7

## KANSAS

Jan. 24-28, May 2-6  
Advanced training/September

## MARYLAND

March 28-April 1, September 19-23

## MISSOURI

TBA – 4 Trainings, Contact Jay Wood  
jay@missourikidsfirst.org

## MISSISSIPPI

February 28 - March 4, August 15-19, October 3-7

## OHIO

July 18-22

## NEW JERSEY

March 14-18, June 6-10, October 24-28

## OKLAHOMA

April 18-22

## PENNSYLVANIA

March 14-18, June 6-10

## SOUTH CAROLINA

March 14-18, July 18-22, October 24-28

## VIRGINIA

TBA

## WEST VIRGINIA

March 13-18th, October 3-7

\*ChildFirst® state programs are open only to child protection professionals working or residing in the state in which the course is held. Also, please note that several states have not finalized their 2011 calendar and thus you should contact individual state coordinators for updated calendars.

# Training For Forensic Interviewers Calendar 2011

## USING PEER REVIEW TO GENERATE CORROBORATING EVIDENCE

*For: Multidisciplinary Team Members and Forensic Interviewers*

March 7-9, 2011 in Winona, MN

June 27-29, 2011 in Winona, MN

October 17-19, 2011 in Bentonville, AR

Applications may be completed individually or as an MDT team. Each application must contain a professional who practices forensic interviewing— a member of a multidisciplinary team. You may apply in a MDT group (up to 4 people), but one member must be someone who conducts forensic interviews. Please note whether you apply as a group, or as an individual, the cost is \$50 per person. In this course, peer review practices will be used to improve the ability of forensic interviewers and multidisciplinary teams to generate corroborating evidence. MDT members will watch several child interviews and discuss what, if anything, the interviewer could have done to collect additional information from the child that could have translated into corroborating evidence. The attendees will also share their own forensic interviews and participate in a peer review of their own work. No significant experience is required. NCPTC applies for MN POST and MN CLE Board credits for this course, when hosted in Minnesota. NCPTC applies for AR CLEST and AR CLE Board credits for this course, when hosted in Arkansas.

Visit [www.ncptc.org](http://www.ncptc.org) to download the application – Click on *Training Conferences*. You will be notified of your registration confirmation and acceptance. **Registration Fee: \$50 per registrant; fee must be submitted with application.**

## FORENSIC INTERVIEWER AT TRIAL

*For: Prosecutor/Civil Child Protection Attorney and Forensic Interviewer*

May 23-25, 2011 in Winona, MN

This course is designed for teams of two. Make sure you apply in a team of two consisting of one prosecutor and one forensic interviewer. This training requires attorneys and forensic interviewers to work together in preparation for a child abuse trial. The course combines lectures and practical court exercises to enhance the ability of the forensic interviewer and prosecutor or civil child protection attorney to defend the forensic interview and multidisciplinary team investigation from attacks by the defense. NCPTC applies for MN POST and MN CLE Board credits for this course.

Visit [www.ncptc.org](http://www.ncptc.org) to download the application – Click on *Training Conferences*. You will be notified of your registration confirmation and acceptance. **Registration Fee: \$50 per registrant (therefore a team of two is \$100); fee must be submitted with application.**

## FROM CRIME SCENE TO TRIAL

*For: Diverse Group of Four consisting of any combination of the following: Prosecutor, Social Worker, Case Manager, Forensic Interviewer, Law Enforcement Officer, Investigator or Child Protection Attorney*

June 15-17, 2011 at NCPTC in Winona, MN

This course provides detailed instruction in the investigation of a crime scene and how seemingly unimportant details can become critical at trial. This training includes a crime scene investigation to be conducted in the “mock house” at the NCPTC training facility. NCPTC applies for MN POST and MN CLE Board credits for this course.

Visit [www.ncptc.org](http://www.ncptc.org) to download the application – Click on *Training Conferences*. You will be notified of your registration confirmation and acceptance. **Registration Fee: \$50 per registrant (therefore a team of four totals \$200); fee must be submitted with application.**

## WEBINARS

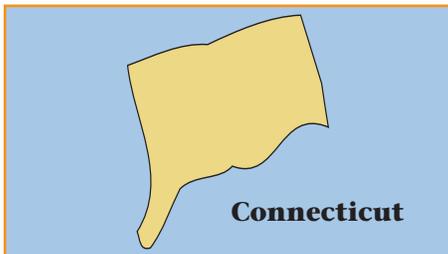
NCPTC offers online webinar training, monthly! Every third Thursday of the month at 2:00pm, and each webinar is only \$15 per registrant. Visit our website and click on Webinars to register. There will be a live question and answer portion with an NCPTC trainer at each webinar.

# ChildFirst® Program Updates

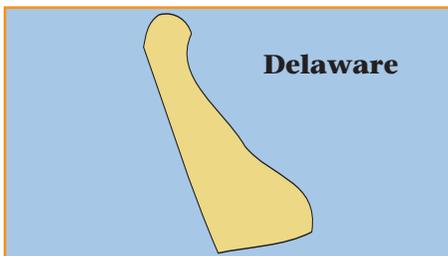
(in alphabetical Order)



Since 2006, *ChildFirst*® Arkansas has trained 502 professionals. With the funding we are receiving from the Arkansas State Legislative Taskforce on Abused and Neglected Children and the Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence we are taking *ChildFirst*® to Bentonville, Monticello and Jonesboro, Arkansas in 2011. Our hope is to train the remaining 15 counties so that all counties in Arkansas will have received *ChildFirst*® training. In addition, all of our 75 counties in the state have or are developing a multidisciplinary team approach to child abuse investigations.



The state of Connecticut will hold two trainings in 2011. The first, April 11-15, 2011 and the second October 17-21, 2011. Both training will be held at the Police Officers Standards and Training Council (POSTC) located in the State Police Academy, 285 Preston Ave., Meriden, CT.



*ChildFirst*® Delaware continues to provide this quality course statewide. Although we were only able to offer the course once in 2010, we anticipate

offering it twice in 2011. The first course will be offered the week of April 11, 2011 and the second course will be offered the week of October 3, 2011. Delaware's commitment to the course remains strong and was reaffirmed recently when DE's Child Protection Accountability Commission, the state's child protection task force, made multidisciplinary training a priority for improving Delaware's child protection system. To bolster that, Children's Justice Act funds have been dedicated to support a training coordinator's position. It is our hope that this position will help keep our *ChildFirst*® program strong and allow us to expand the training in the future.



Georgia is looking forward to another great year for *ChildFirst*®! Georgia is holding trainings on March 14-18, May 9-13 and September 12-16. The state continues to move towards the goal of having all child abuse professionals trained.



In Illinois, our program is grateful for the talented and experienced group of faculty and actors who make each course so successful and valuable. Additionally, we thank the 450 frontline professionals we have trained over the years. All of these groups – despite funding, political, and other challenges – have remained faithful to developing their knowledge and skills to help the children in our state. Graduates of our course are serving in 95 of our 102 counties, and we are

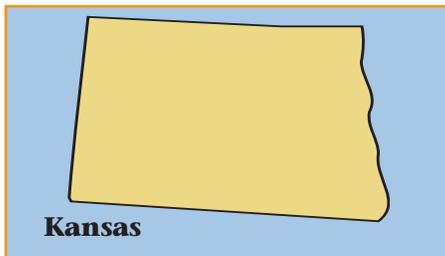
devoted to training many more individuals who will help to cover the entire state. Our next opportunity to work toward that goal is in October 2011, when we will hold our 14th course to date. For more information, child abuse professionals in Illinois should visit [www.cacionline.org](http://www.cacionline.org) or contact Jordan Benning, Associate Director of Training and Education (217.528.2224, [jordan@cacionline.org](mailto:jordan@cacionline.org)).



Indiana has been busy! In 2010 our faculty conducted 5 sessions of *ChildFirst*® *Finding Words* training for more than 200 students. These trainings have brought the total number of students trained to over 1400 students trained in Indiana. Indiana has determined that moving our training sessions all over the State of Indiana we are able to cover smaller and surrounding counties with less opportunity to attend trainings located in distances that are not affordable for budgets in their counties. February, July & October, 2011 trainings are underway and with great response to filling each class. Our faculty continues to grow with skills from many different areas. In 2010 we were able to update our equipment and have now put together a new binder with the updated 2010 materials, along with updating our Power Points. Evaluations seem to be very positive with students commenting that this is the best training they have ever attended. Our hope for the future is that we can continue to provide the best training possible in order to make the future of our children the most positive and best experience possible. Our hope is that every child in Indiana is provided the opportunity to experience a forensic interview with a trained professional who believes that *ChildFirst*® is the best training available!



CornerHouse and NCPTC spent 4 weeks in Japan during 2010. During this time the *ChildFirst*® Japan faculty was trained in *ChildFirst*® and presented the training for feedback. *ChildFirst*® Japan was fully certified by NCPTC and CornerHouse on August 11th, 2010. Then we were able to host a viewing of the When Words Matter conference with live Japanese translation during the summer! We are currently planning to hold *ChildFirst*® Japan in March, 2011 at Yokohama. Several local governments including Nagano Prefecture, Saitama Prefecture and Aich Prefecture have expressed interest in *ChildFirst*® Japan training. We hope to educate many professionals in the RATA<sup>C</sup>® protocol in Japan in the coming years.



*Finding Words* of Kansas is having 2 regular classes this year, Jan. 24-28 and May 2-6. In Sept. we are having an advance class for our grads, first time for us. We cut back to two regular classes because demand was down, probably because of the economy but also because we have so many trained. Things are going good with our classes and although challenged in court, have not succeeded in hurting us.



Maryland is proud to be among the minority of states whose *ChildFirst*®

program has reached multi-disciplinary teams in all its counties and jurisdictions. Last year, in 2010, Maryland trained 95 professionals from 22 jurisdictions in its three programs. We offered one centrally located program, and then took one to the Eastern shore of Maryland and one to the Western mountains. This year, two programs will be offered, both centrally located, and the usual wait lists are expected. Our professional faculty is further involved in our communities as expert witnesses, heads of departments, and nationally-recognized speakers. Our program continues to grow and remain a driving force in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases.



The Children's Advocacy Centers of Mississippi (CACM) hosted four *ChildFirst*® Mississippi trainings during 2010 with a total of 94 participants. Faculty from child advocacy staff, county prosecutor's office and the federal prosecutor's office donate their time to assist professionals in learning the skills needed to competently interview children. CACM would not be able to provide such a valuable training if it wasn't for the support of these caring individuals. Local CACs contributed over 100 hours of time by allowing staff to participate as faculty, actors, or helping coordinate each forensic interview training. 2011 *ChildFirst*® Mississippi trainings are scheduled for February 28th-March 4th, August 15th-19th, and October 3rd-7th.



Missouri held three regional *ChildFirst*® trainings in 2010. Missouri has gone to a regional approach trying to limit

travel and overnight costs for participants. All *ChildFirst*® trainings are coordinated regionally through the Child Advocacy Centers and participants are chosen on a regional basis. Missouri has also introduced a three day MDT based training that is held in conjunction with the traditional five day *ChildFirst*® Forensic Interviewer training. The training follows much of the format of the five day training but does not include the mock videotaped interviewing portion involving adult actors or proficiency testing. This allows for more MDT participation from each of the regions. In 2010 Missouri trained 162 professionals from 38 counties, with 69 of those completing the full 5 Day *ChildFirst*® Forensic Interviewer Training. In 2010 we also trained and added new faculty to better support the regional training concept. For 2011 we will do four regional *ChildFirst*® trainings in Missouri. The first one being scheduled for March of 2011 in Kansas City, Mo. This photo is of the Participants from the December 2010 *ChildFirst*® training in St. Louis.



Missouri *ChildFirst*® training in St. Louis



The state will hold its 2011 training on July 18-22nd. Ohio continues to train the many professionals in the state dedicated to serving the children and families.

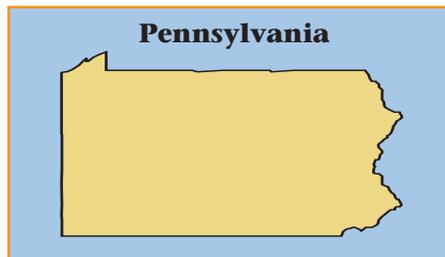


*Finding Words/ChildFirst®* Oklahoma had one class in 2010, but have two planned for 2011. Our class in November 2010 was full with a waiting list that I attribute to us getting a grant so that we could offer this tuition free, not something we were able to do for the Spring session. Our next class will be the week of April 18th and will again be tuition free. One of the things that we have done the last couple of times during the Dynamics lecture is to use an audio clip from the book *Freedom Writers*. It has many dynamics in it and is read by a teenager. I feel like it has been a successful addition to our program. I continue to be amazed at the end of the week as so many students were so scared of the interviews with the actors, but felt like that was the best part and really helped them learn the material. We have trained a total of 279 students from 42 of our 77 counties and have again applied for the grant so that the course can be offered tuition free.



*ChildFirst®/Finding Words* – New Jersey has held 29 trainings, and has trained a total of 1,039 people in all 21 counties. New Jersey continues to train Detectives, Assistant Prosecutors, DYFS Intake Workers, Deputy Attorney Generals, Clinicians, and Medical Doctors. New Jersey had six trainings in 2010, three of which were specialized for the Division of Youth and Family Services Caseworkers. We have six trainings scheduled for 2011. One training is county specific and will be in February 2011, and two trainings will be specialized for the Division of Youth and Family Services Caseworkers (dates have not been determined yet). The other three trainings will be held in the three regions of New Jersey. The Southern New Jersey training will be held at the Cumberland County Community College in Vineland on March 14-18,

2011. The Northern New Jersey training will be held at the Passaic County Public Safety Academy in Wayne on June 6-10, 2011. The Central New Jersey training will be held at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville on October 24-28, 2011. New Jersey has held two RATA<sup>C</sup> review/advanced trainings for detectives and forensic interviewers. New Jersey continues to work on the research project based on the process of disclosure with the RATA<sup>C</sup> protocol in collaboration with NCPTC and CornerHouse. Dr. Anthony D'Urso and Dr. Patricia Sermabeikian presented at the *When Words Matter* Conference in July 2010.



NCPTC and CornerHouse look forward to working with Pennsylvania over the next year to bring *ChildFirst®* there. This exciting initiative is being led by the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Solicitors Association. The training will start the week of March 14, 2011 with week two scheduled for June 13, 2011. The final week of training will begin March 12, 2012. All training is scheduled to take place on the campus of Messiah University in Grantham, PA.



From March 2001 through October 2010, we've trained 691 professionals including: 38 prosecutors, 213 law enforcement officers, 229 child protection case workers, and 211 children's advocacy center interviewers. Thirty-nine of South Carolina's forty-six counties have trained forensic interviewers and either have a multidisciplinary team or are able to partner with another county's team. In 2010, based on an initiative of the South Carolina's Children's Justice Act Task Force, six of South Carolina's children's advocacy centers conducted training for child abuse professionals served by the centers. The training was designed to reinforce the efforts of the centers'

multidisciplinary teams and to acquaint child abuse professionals with the centers' services. The training was conducted by a forensic interviewer employed by the center and a law enforcement investigator with whom the interviewer routinely worked as part of the center's MDT. The training was effective in reinforcing the centers' MDTs and in acquainting additional child abuse professionals with services offered the centers. The training also offered the forensic interviewers and law enforcement investigators conducting the training the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise and teamwork. *ChildFirst®* South Carolina coordinators, faculty, and actors anticipate another busy year of training. We look forward to continued coordination with the NCPTC, CornerHouse and other *ChildFirst®* state programs.



Virginia training dates will be announced soon. Virginia has been very busy and is looking forward to the upcoming training in 2011. Stay tuned for more to come on all that is happening in Virginia



*Finding Words/ChildFirst®* WV has held 17 trainings since 2004, training over 500 professional in over 45 of our 55 counties. West Virginia continues to train Prosecutors, Law Enforcement, Child Protective Service Workers and Forensic Interviews who are employed by our State's Child Advocacy Centers. West Virginia had two trainings in 2010, where we trained 55 individuals. We have two trainings scheduled for 2011. The first training will be held March 14-18 at Camp Dawson, Kingwood, WV, and the other will be held October 3-7 at WV State Police Academy, Institute, WV. Our program continues to improve with the inclusion of new staff members, equipment, etc. We hope that soon we will have trained at least one individual in each of our 55 counties.

# National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC)



## ABOUT US

The National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to ending child abuse through education, training, awareness, prevention and the pursuit of justice. NCPTC instructors train thousands of child protection professionals across the U.S. and internationally, year-round. NCPTC sustains and hosts forensic interviewing training courses as well as multidisciplinary team training. Additionally, NCPTC actively strives to prepare future front-line professionals to recognize and report the abuse of a child, through the implementation of NCPTC model curriculums. Furthermore, the staff provides technical assistance to child protection professionals, and victim/survivor assistance, on an ongoing basis.

## SPEAKERS BUREAU

Need a speaker for an upcoming training event? Check out the NCPTC Speakers Bureau, visit [www.ncptc.org](http://www.ncptc.org) click on *Speakers Bureau*. We have a list of specialized professionals who can travel to your event to fulfill your training needs. EMAIL: [trainings@ncptc-jwrc.org](mailto:trainings@ncptc-jwrc.org)

## Advanced Forensic Interviewer Training

### Interviewing Teenage Victims of Abuse – 2 1/2 day Training

*For: Forensic interviewers who have completed a 40 hour forensic interviewing course and actively conducting interviews*

This course is designed for forensic interviewers actively conducting forensic interviews with minors involving child abuse allegations and maltreatment. Forensic interviewers are required to have successfully completed a basic forensic interviewing course. This two and a half day course will focus on forensic interviews with teenage victims of child abuse and maltreatment. The course combines lectures and practical mock interview exercises to enhance the ability of the forensic interviewer conducting interviews with teenagers.

**May 4, 5, 6th: Bentonville, Arkansas**

**June 27, 28, 29th: Bentonville, Arkansas**

Visit [www.ncptc.org](http://www.ncptc.org) to register online for this training. Click on *Training Conferences*. You will be notified of your registration confirmation and acceptance.

**Registration Fee: \$50 per registrant.**

## NWACC

NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC), in Bentonville Arkansas, has been selected by NCPTC to be the first of four regional center locations. The NWACC-NCPTC facility will provide training, technical assistance and publications to child protection professionals, with a focus on 15 southern U.S. states. NCPTC at NWACC currently host training courses on the NWACC campus.

For more information on our Programs: **Center for Effective Discipline (CED) and the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center (JWRC)**, please visit our website and click on *Programs*.

**Remember April 30th is Spank Out Day!**  
Visit [www.ncptc.org](http://www.ncptc.org)

