

Developmental Issues in Interviewing Children

Specific information to consider when interviewing children in the following categories:

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (AGES 2-6)

- **Spatiality (Space)** - Spatiality can be assessed by directing a child to put an object over or under a table, or ask a child if the play dough is in or out of the can. Ask a child if their feet are above or below the table or direct a child to put the red Lego in front of the blue one. The interviewer can continue with more difficult assessments until the child's spatiality threshold is reached.
- **Temporality (Time)** - Temporality can be assessed by asking the child such questions as: "Who was in the room first? You? Or me?", "Who is the biggest or oldest kid at your house?", "Who's next?", "Which do you put on first, your shoes or socks?", and "When was your birthday?"
- **Receptive vs. Expressive Language** - Younger children generally have greater receptive language skills than expressive language skills, meaning they can understand more than they can say. Note that a child appears to understand the questions but seems to have difficulty answering, even though they may know the answer.
- **Sequencing and Logical Progression** - This skill is most often only marginally developed, except for older preschoolers.

SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN (AGES 6 -11)

- **Sequencing and Logical Progression** - Ask the child to relate what he/she has done in school so far today. Ask the child to explain how to make chocolate chip cookies or how to do some other every day function.
- **Concrete and Abstract Concepts** - Children younger than about age eleven can use abstract terms but cannot define them. Latency age children are usually able to give examples of concepts like lie, reward, and cooperation.

Developmental Issues in Interviewing Children (Cont'd)

- **Cursory Understanding of Consequences and Cause and Effect** - School age children usually can answer questions such as, “You said you didn't have to go to school on Tuesday, how come?”, or “What was the reason your big brother had to go to the dentist?”

ADOLESCENCE (AGES 11- 17)

- **Express Opposing Views Equally** - The young teen or teen is typically capable of answering questions such as, “You said you were thinking about looking for a summer job. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a job?”, or “Sounds like you and your mom don't always get along. Tell me some of the things you agree on....What do you disagree about?”
- **Recognize and Articulate Motivations and Rationale for Others Behavior** The young teen or teen may answer questions such as, “I'll bet that some of your friends broke up with their boyfriends this summer. What do you think their reasons were?”, or “Some of the kids at your school are into gangs. How come a kid your age thinks being in a gang is cool?”

(Colorado, Module C, as cited in Sherrid, Gale L., 2010)