

Child Interviews

The following are some considerations when preparing for an interview with a child or youth:

- When considering sequencing, more than one child is involved,
 - separate interviews of all children/youth maximize the integrity of the information obtained;
 - siblings should always be interviewed;
 - other children (such as friends who may have seen what happened) may be interviewed after the child, sibling and parents; and
 - in the initial interview with the parent or caregiver, it may be helpful to gather information, such as the child's cognitive level, individual needs, words for body parts and body functions and schedules (nap time, meal times, school schedules and custody arrangements)
- When considering the timing, focus should be on choosing a time that is best for the child:
 - interview children when they are rested and fed; and
 - children with developmental or medical concerns should be individually assessed to determine how they can best be interviewed (e.g., use of language board).
- When considering the location:
 - it is best to interview young children in a room specifically designed for children, furnished with child-sized furniture if possible;
 - wear more loosely-fitted clothing or different clothing, since part of the interview may be done while sitting on the floor; and
 - for teenagers or older children, try to arrange for some place their friends will not accidentally see them being interviewed.
- When looking at materials needed,
 - take crayons/markers and blank paper, instead of pencils and tablet paper;
 - have Release of Information forms for medical and mental health information and treatment for children age 14 or over; and
 - consider what materials might be available in the room/location you are using for the interview.

Child Interviews (Cont'd)

Take into consideration that the child may use a different sequencing when communicating their story. For instance, it may be more about the importance of the events that happened rather than a chronological detailing of what occurred, especially with younger children. For example:

#1 (Chronological): My mom said if I put my dolls in the closet and my toys in the box, she'll buy me a present. So I did, and she took me to Wal-Mart, and we looked at kid's stuff, and I picked ribbons.

#2 (Event-oriented): See my ribbons. I just got them. They're new. My mom said they make me look pretty. All of us kids have to clean up our room. It's called our chores. Mom says kids need to do chores because everybody has to do their part and when you do your part your mom is happy with you.

As a result, interviewers may need to listen to the story as the child tells it first and then go back and clarify in what order events or pieces of the process occurred. The interviewer may want to use some tools in order to help the child tell the story, such as:

- Crayons and Paper
- Puppets
- Dolls
- Play Dough
- Toy Telephones
- Other objects, clothing or furniture in the room