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# Evaluation of a Comprehensive Interactive Training System for Investigative Interviewers of Children

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This article reports on the evaluation of an interactive interviewer training system with a large, heterogeneous sample of investigative interviewers of children. The system, delivered predominantly through computer-assisted learning activities, focused on how to elicit important evidential details from child witnesses in a narrative format. Two studies are reported, each adopting a pre-versus posttraining design. Study 1 examined the effect of the training on trainees' ($N$ = 92) performance, using mock interviews where an actor played the role of the child in a highly controlled manner. Study 2 examined the effect of the training on field interviews ($N$ = 156) conducted prior to and after the training. Five measures were analyzed: (a) proportion of interviewer question types, (b) proportion of desirable interviewer behaviors, (c) adherence to the interview protocol, (d) interview length, and (e) the quality of evidential information sought. Overall, the findings provide clear support for the utility of the training system. Irrespective of the type of interview or measure, adherence to best-practice interviewing increased from pre- to posttraining, with some evidence supporting sustained performance 12 months after there had been no intervening training or supervision. The implication is that there is now an evidence-based alternative to the traditional classroom-based training system for investigative interviewers. Suggestions for future research are also discussed.

*Keywords:* child witnesses, investigative interviewing, interview training, training evaluation

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Investigative interviewing of child abuse complainants is a complex process centered on the elicitation of accurate, detailed, and coherent accounts of offenses. Such interviewing requires highly specialized training. The current article reports on the evaluation of a new interactive training system with a large cohort of child abuse interviewers in two jurisdictions of Australia. The new system consisted of computer-assisted learning activities, which focused on using open-ended questions to elicit narrative accounts for both investigative and evidential purposes. The learning activities, prepared in collaboration with academics and industry partners, were completed over several months in trainees' regular workplace environments. Delivery of the learning exercises was standardized and controlled via an online learning site that uses a management system to allow in-house (organizational) trainers to track individuals' progress.

The new training system was developed to address global and long-standing concerns about the efficacy of mainstream interviewer training programs and the broader research on how practical skills are learned and sustained (Cederborg, Alm, Lima da Silva Nises, & Lamb, 2013; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz et al., 2002; Powell, 2002, 2008; Powell, Wright, & Clark, 2010; Rischke, Roberts, & Price, 2011). Despite strong consensus about what constitutes best-practice interviewing, a major gap exists between interviewing methods dictated in evidence-based interview protocols and those strategies used by interviewers in the field (Cederborg, Orbach, Sternberg, & Lamb, 2000; Korkman, Santtila &, Sandnabba, 2006; Lamb et al., 2009; Sternberg et al., 1996). To address this gap, researchers have identified the need for change in the structure and delivery method of traditional training programs (Powell, 2008, 2013). Before presenting the new training system, we provide a brief overview of what constitutes best-practice interviewing and the findings of prior research evaluations.

## What Constitutes Best-Practice Investigative Interviewing of Children

A wide range of factors determines the quality of any child witness statement of abuse. These include the state of the child at the time of the event and the interview, the nature of the event being recalled, and contextual factors related to the interview setting (Pipe, Lamb, Orbach, & Esplin, 2004; Steele, 2012). In particular, children's social skills and their linguistic and cognitive capacity affect their ability to understand questions, to remember details, and to provide reliable answers (Poole & Lamb, 1998). Interviewer prompts and cues facilitate memory and recall, but they also increase errors when inaccurate details are raised by the interviewer or when the witness does not know the details re-

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quested (Bruck & Ceci, 2004; Ceci, Papierno, & Kulkofsky, 2007; London & Kulkofsky, 2009; Malloy & Quas, 2009; Salmon, 2001). The overriding aim of interview protocols, therefore, is to encourage detailed disclosures while minimizing the incidence of inappropriate interviewer cues and prompts (Brown et al., 2013; Lamb, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2008; Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2007; Orbach et al., 2000).

Three features define most contemporary child interview protocols. First, instructional ground rules about the interview process are included because they can potentially enhance children's abilities to be accurate informants (Cordón, Saetermoe, & Goodman, 2005; Krackow & Lynn, 2010; Rohwer, Kloo, & Perner, 2012). For example, Mulder and Vrij (1996) found that children who were told it was acceptable to say "I don't know" and who actively rehearsed this rule made fewer errors when subsequently interviewed about a staged event compared to children who were not told the rule. Mulder and Vrij proposed that the ground rule reduced pressure that could have manifested as suggestive influence later in the interview, if the children felt that they must acquiesce to the interviewers' leading questions or suggestive utterances. The benefits of interview instructions and conversational rules are not always evident in studies, but they are generally included in protocols in an attempt to minimize error (Brubacher, Poole, & Dickinson, 2015).

A second feature common to most contemporary interview protocols is the practice narrative (Brubacher, Roberts, & Powell, 2011; La Rooy et al., 2015; Lamb et al., 2007, 2008; Lyon, 2010; Price, Roberts, & Collins, 2013; Roberts, Brubacher, Powell, & Price, 2011; Roberts, Lamb, & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997; State of Michigan Forensic Interviewing Protocol, 2011). Here, children are encouraged to briefly narrate a neutral or positive event unrelated to the abuse. This task has been found to increase the detail of subsequent reports of abuse because it provides practice in responding to various interviewer prompts and familiarizes the child with the type of communication and level of specificity expected. In essence, the task sets up a form of interaction where the child is the informant and the interviewer is naïve about the child's experiences (see Roberts et al., 2011, for a review).

The third feature known to facilitate detailed disclosure is the use of open-ended questions. Although there is no recommendation in the literature of the ideal proportion of open-ended questions to use, experts advise that these questions should be maximized, particularly in the substantive phase of the interview when the abusive event is being discussed (Lamb et al., 2007, 2008; Lyon, 2010; Powell & Snow, 2007; Saywitz, Lyon, & Goodman, 2011; Sternberg et al., 1996). Open-ended questions are those that encourage elaborate and coherent responses but do not specify what information is required (Powell & Snow, 2007). Compared to specific questions (that dictate which specific details are required and narrow the child's response options), open-ended questions elicit longer, more detailed, and more accurate responses (Dent & Stephenson, 1979; Sternberg et al., 1996). Further, open-ended questions maximize narrative language and victim credibility (Feltis, Powell, Snow, & Hughes-Scholes, 2010), and increase the number of temporal and contextual attributes provided, such as references to sequencing, dating, number of occurrences, duration, and frequency (Orbach & Lamb, 2007). The superiority of open-ended questions is that they require a deeper level (i.e., more elaborate type) of memory processing compared to when the witness responds to specific questions (Lamb et al., 2008; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Powell & Snow, 2007). Specific questions, in contrast, probe recognition memory for details that may not be in memory and exert greater pressure on the child to respond (Hershkowitz, 2001; Lamb, Sternberg, & Esplin, 1995; Powell, Fisher, & Wright, 2005; Sternberg et al., 1996). Importantly, the beneficial effects of open-ended questions have been found for all witnesses, including preschoolers (Agnew & Powell, 2004; Hershkowitz, Lamb, Orbach, Katz, & Horowitz, 2012; Lamb et al., 2003). Further, they have been associated with higher incidence of charges, guilty pleas, and guilty verdicts (Pipe, Orbach, Lamb, Abbott, & Stewart, 2013).

The three central features of best-practice interview protocols are usually quantified to provide measures of an interviewers' adherence to best practice interviewing. The incidence of question types are tallied and the presence of interview components, such as ground rules and the elicitation of a practice narrative, are usually noted in evaluations. Previous evaluations have also examined the number of forensically relevant details provided by the child (Dion & Cyr, 2008; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin, & Mitchell, 2002; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz et al., 2002; Luther, Snook, Barron & Lamb, 2014; Price & Roberts, 2011; Warren et al., 1999). A more recent approach to measuring relevance, however, relates not to the child but whether the interviewer sought important detail (e.g., identity of the offender, the location and timing of the offense) while not pursuing extraneous detail such as a description of the offender when the offender has been identified as the child's biological father (Burrows, Powell, & Anglim, 2013). This measure, applicable in jurisdictions where the witness interview is used on direct examination, evolves from a new generation of research, focused on prosecutors' concerns about long and poorly focused interviews with irrelevant questioning about specific details (Burrows & Powell, 2014; Cashmore & Trimboli, 2005; McConachy, 2002). Prosecutors have argued that coherency and relevance of the information elicited is more important than the quantity of details. With longer interviews there is more detail that could be used by defense to undermine the credibility of the child's account during cross-examination (Burrows & Powell, 2013).

## Evaluation of Prior Child Investigative Interviewing Training

A brief overview of the major evaluations of child interview training programs over the past 15 years is presented in Table S1, "An overview of past training evaluations" (contained in the online supplementary material). As illustrated in this table, the biggest issue facing evaluators has been closing the gap between recommended interview technique and actual practice. While the prevalence of leading questions (where new information is presumed or suggested by the interviewer) is typically low, investigative interviewers tend to ask specific (rather than open-ended) questions, which risk contaminating children's accounts. Most evaluations show an increase in the use of open-ended questions during training; however, the overall proportion of open-ended questions tends to remain low, even after training. Half of the evaluation studies presented in Table S1 report average posttraining open-ended question usage as 25% or less. Further, for the training programs

that included a follow-up assessment, a decline in performance was generally evident within 6 months after training or feedback ceased (Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin et al., 2002; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz et al., 2002; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg, Lamb, Davies, & Westcott, 2001; Price & Roberts, 2011; Rischke et al., 2011). In fact, one study found that trainee interviewers who showed good open-ended question usage immediately posttraining, were at 1 month posttraining no better at adhering to open-ended questions than trainees who had received no formal training in interviewing at all (Smith et al., 2009).

Research has identified two components related to the structure and delivery format of training programs, which may be key to reducing the gap between recommended interview technique and that practiced in the workplace. First, most training programs are compiled and delivered by practitioners who are assigned from within organizations, rotated regularly and have little opportunity to immerse themselves in the large volume of eyewitness memory, child development, and human learning literature (Powell & Barnett, 2015). Without full understanding of that literature, there is usually dilution and miscommunication of the content (Clark, Kirschner, & Sweller, 2012). Knowing how to teach interviewing is a complex and rapidly evolving area of scientific research, as the skill must be deconstructed into various components to make optimal use of trainees' cognitive resources. For example, interviewing children requires an understanding of what constitutes best-practice interviewing (e.g., Cederborg et al., 2013; Myklebust & Bjørklund, 2006; Orbach et al., 2000; Price & Roberts, 2011), the ability to identify various questions types (Powell, Benson, Sharman, Guadagno, & Steinberg, 2013; Yii, Powell, & Guadagno, 2014), the ability to remember various question stems (Price & Roberts, 2011; Powell, 2008; Rischke et al., 2011), and knowledge of what information should be elicited in an interview (Burrows & Powell, 2013; Mugford, Corey, & Bennell, 2013). Provision of feedback and practice without a good understanding of the scientific human learning literature can be ineffective (or even detrimental) for trainee learning (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback must involve active trainee participation (e.g., encouraging the trainee to generate solutions and put them into practice immediately) and be targeted at specific behavior (Powell, Fisher, & Hughes-Scholes, 2008a). Actors who play the role of the child in mock interviews must be skilled at providing standardized responses to certain prompts and tailoring the difficulty level to the individual interviewer to minimize potential rehearsal of errors (Forgey, Badger, Gilbert, & Hansen, 2013; Sharman, Hughes-Scholes, Powell, & Guadagno, 2012). Overall, the skill required in teaching child witness interviewing has been underestimated by most organizations.

The second component of traditional training programs that may address the gap between recommended and actual practice is the delivery method. Most training programs involve one or two internal instructors (and the occasional academic expert) providing face-to-face lectures, during which trainees are largely passive participants. Learning is confined to one intensive block of time (e.g., the training time in the studies listed in Table S1 range from 6 consecutive hours to 10 consecutive days). This format potentially hinders trainees' progress by restricting the degree to which individuals can progress at their own pace, and take an active role in their learning. High student-to-teacher ratios provide limited opportunities to learn and practice interview skills and to receive immediate individualized feedback.

## Developments Toward the New System of Training

Research in the interviewer-training field has made some headway in identifying how to amend the structure and format of training programs to more successfully reduce the gap between best-practice guidelines and actual interview practice. Specifically researchers have increased the intensity and frequency of feedback, prolonged the length of time during which trainees received feedback, staggered face-to-face training sessions over an extended period of time, and incorporated subsequent "refresher" sessions after training completion (Cederborg et al., 2013; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz et al., 2002; Price & Roberts, 2011; Rischke et al., 2011). While such attempts have led to better success in open-ended question usage, the maintenance of skills over time (from immediate posttraining to several months follow-up) is still problematic.

Another attempt to address the gap has involved incorporation of e-learning technology (Powell, Guadagno & Benson, 2014). E-learning technology has transformed workplace learning across a number of domains in terms of accessibility, flexibility in delivery, cost-efficiency and the fact that trainees can progress through activities in their own time and at their own pace (Donavant, 2009; Gaytan & McEwen, 2007; Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011; Ouellette, Westhuis, Marshall, & Chang, 2006). E-learning allows for active participation from trainees and places more responsibility for professional development on the individual learner. Another benefit of e-learning is that it can incorporate a wider array of media elements, such as text, narration, animations and film clips, as well as empirically supported instructional strategies into the learning environment, which promote long-term retention and transfer of skills and knowledge into practice (Mugford et al., 2013).

In terms of teaching open-ended question usage, several studies have shown the benefit of isolated training activities that could be easily delivered in e-learning format. Such activities include interaction with a computer-generated avatar in a virtual interview environment (Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, & Guadagno, 2015; Pompedda, Zappalà, & Santtila, 2015), computerized quizzes that test interviewers' understanding of various questions (Powell et al., 2013; Yii et al., 2014), an individual exercise requiring rote learning of various questions stems (Powell, 2008), and mock interviews with an actor playing the role of an abused child using telephone or Skype (Powell & Barnett, 2015). The first study to use a combination of these activities within an e-learning format was that by Powell, Cavezza, Hughes-Scholes & Stoove, 2010; Powell, Fisher & Hughes-Scholes, 2008a; Powell et al., 2014. They delivered a series of these computer-based activities over several months to 68 professionals (social workers, police, and psychologists) located across five jurisdictions. The computerized learning was organized into 12 modules, each of approximately 3-hours duration, focusing on skills such as identifying question types, eliciting a disclosure of abuse, assessing and evaluating one's own performance, and enhancing the accuracy of children's accounts of repeated abuse. Immediate feedback on quizzes, exemplars of best-practice interviewing and spaced practice were featured throughout the activities. The results revealed a signifi-

cant improvement in interviewer performance from pretraining to immediate posttraining. For 25 participants who also completed a 6-month follow-up assessment, adherence to an open-ended questioning style was sustained.

The results of Powell et al., 2014 study provide support for the utility of e-learning. It is yet to be determined, however, whether this format is useful on a broad organizational scale and whether the gains in this type of training generalize to the field. The sample of trainees was relatively small, and the participants were self-selected and potentially highly motivated (i.e., the training was a voluntary addition to the core organizational-based training). Further, the assessment was limited to examining open-ended question usage in mock interviews.

## The Current Training Program and Procedure for Evaluation

At the time of this evaluation, the current training system, named the Specialist Vulnerable Witness Forensic Interview Training, had been in operation for 18 months across two Australian jurisdictions. The overriding focus of the training was to increase understanding of sufficient evidential requirements and how to elicit this information in narrative format. The training took a number of months to complete and consisted of 15 modules, covering a wide variety of topics: defining the various question types, child development, techniques on how to elicit a disclosure, how to interview about repeated abuse, identifying relevant legislation, recognizing grooming behavior, and interviewing cross-cultural children and other witnesses with complex communication needs. An interview protocol, similar in structure to the NICHD protocol and approved by local Crown prosecutors (Benson & Powell, manuscript under review) was also introduced. See the Appendix for an overview of the training system's content and structure.

The modules were predominantly delivered over a secure web-based program and engaged the learner through interactive exercises, short film clips, exemplars of best practice, narrated presentations, virtual simulations, self-initiated practices, and quizzes with immediate feedback and explanations of the answers. Individual trainees progressed through the course at their own pace, typically one module per fortnight. However, in-house trainers tracked the progress of trainees through the management system and restricted organizational trainees from advancing through the course too quickly. The recommended time frame was a maximum of one module per week. This recommendation (adhered to by all trainees) enforced spaced practice and ensured that trainees demonstrated fundamental skills before progressing to more advanced modules. All trainees participated in numerous mock interviews, which were conducted over telephone or Skype with actors trained to play the role of abused children (see Powell et al., 2008a, for more details). In-depth, individualized expert feedback was provided immediately during these practices.

The current evaluation reports two studies, each using a different assessment interview. The first study examined the effect of the training on mock interview assessments, using a standardized measure of performance for all trainees where the context and difficulty level could be easily controlled. The second study examined the effect of the training on field interviews. Across these two studies, several measures of performance were analyzed, including open-ended question usage, adherence to interview protocol elements, interview length and the quality of information sought by the interviewer. A range of other measures tested trainees' abilities to effectively engage with children in a developmentally appropriate manner and in a way that satisfied the needs of prosecution. To conclude that the program is effective, improvement in performance must be demonstrated across a range of measures and performance needs to be maintained over time.

## Study 1 (Mock Interviews)

### Method

**Participants.** The current study was approved by the Deakin University Ethics Committee and the managers of the participating organizations. Although completion of the training was a job requirement, participation in the evaluation component was voluntary. Any trainee who had granted consent to participate and had completed the training by November 2014 was eligible. The final sample included 92 trainees (73 female, 19 male), which is highly representative of all the trainees who had enrolled in the training. Eleven trainees withdrew from the training due to various circumstances. This dropout is typical across training courses due to staff turnover and unexpected leave. One trainee denied participation in the research component.

The sample of trainees was highly heterogeneous in terms of location, experience, and job role. Trainees resided in two jurisdictions in Australia, spanning across 15 different locations, both metro and rural. Sixty-four of the trainees worked for their respective jurisdictions' police force as detectives and constables, and 28 were child protection workers. Of the 92 trainees who participated, 52 were already qualified as specialist child interviewers from previous organizational training, with between 6 months and 10 years of experience ($M = 1.86$ years, $SD = 2.41$), and continued to interview children while completing the training program. Forty trainees had never interviewed a child in a forensic setting before and according to legislation, were only permitted to interview children about alleged abuse in a field setting after successful completion of the training.

**Interview assessment.** All trainees completed two mock interview assessments: one prior to commencing the training program (hereby referred to as *pretraining assessment*) and one immediately after completing the training program (referred to as *posttraining assessment*). Thirty-nine trainees also conducted a mock interview between 3 and 6 months after completion of the training program (referred to as *follow-up assessment).* This subsample was heterogeneous; it encompassed both novice and previously experienced interviewers, from police and child protection organizations across the two jurisdictions.

The mock interview assessments involved trainees interviewing adult actors playing the role of 5-year-old male and female children reporting alleged abuse. Several actors were used, all of who had been trained to adhere to the same guidelines that dictated how to respond in a developmentally appropriate manner to various questions. Prior to conducting a mock interview, trainees were provided with a case scenario, which provided brief background case information. There were 12 different scenarios in all, which reflected a range of abuse types. The background information for each scenario was phrased in a manner that suggested, but did not

explicitly state, that abuse had occurred. Trainees were aware that each scenario could have an innocent (i.e., nonabusive) explanation. Trainees were instructed to commence the interview with the prompt, "Tell me what you have come to talk about," and to then elicit as detailed and accurate information as possible about the alleged abusive event. The case scenarios were fully counterbalanced across assessment phases and across participants such that no trainee received the same scenario twice. Trainees were advised that they could terminate the interview at any point, or when they felt all necessary information had been elicited. All of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

**Measures.** There were two categories of measures: interviewer questions and interviewer behavior.

***Interviewer questions.*** Three question types were coded. Open-ended questions were defined as any question that encouraged an elaborate response, but did not dictate what specific information was required (e.g., "What happened then?," "Tell me more about the part where [activity or detail previously reported by the respondent]"). Specific questions were defined as questions that focused the child's attention on predisclosed details or aspects of the event and specified what precise information should be reported. These included cued-recall 'Wh-' questions that elicited information on who, what, when, where, why, or how (e.g., "What's John's last name?"), yes/no questions and option-posing questions (e.g., "Was it his left hand or his right hand?"). Leading questions were those questions that presumed or included a specific detail that was not previously mentioned by the child. The number of open-ended questions asked before the first specific question was also tallied, as was minimal encouragers (often referred to as facilitators; Lamb et al., 1996). These are utterances that encouraged the child to continue talking, without disrupting the flow of conversation (e.g., "Uh huh"). Because minimal encouragers often serve the same function as open-ended questions (Powell & Snow, 2007), they were included in the open-ended question category for some of the analyses.

***Interviewer behavior.*** A checklist was created that defined 14 interviewer behaviors representing best-practice interviewing. These behaviors addressed the ability to: launch a narrative with an appropriate open-ended invitation, correctly implement ground rules, use a variety of minimal encouragers, stick to one occurrence at a time, exhaust each narrative, identify the child's use of generic language, allow the child to talk without interruption, ask a range of open-ended questions, use simple language, avoid the use of pronouns, stick to past tense, use developmentally appropriate language, avoid complex concepts, and avoid "Can you" questions. For each behavior exhibited by the interviewer, and where it was possible for the interviewer to demonstrate that behavior in the interview, 1 point was awarded. Note that a single point was awarded irrespective of how many times the behavior was observed in the interview.

All transcripts were coded by one person and 20% were also coded by a second researcher who was not otherwise involved in this research. Coders were blind as to whether the interview had been conducted prior to or after training. Interrater reliability analyses using the Kappa statistic were performed to determine consistency among raters for both measures. Landis and Koch's (1977) classifications of 0.0 to 0.2 as a slight agreement, 0.21 to 0.40 as a fair agreement, 0.41 to 0.60 as a moderate agreement, 0.61 to 0.80 as a substantial agreement, and 0.81 to 1.00 as an almost perfect agreement were used for interpretation. Agreement between coders was found to be high for interviewer questions ($\kappa = 0.96$), substantial for the use of simple language and an appropriate open-ended invitation (Kappas = 0.80), and moderate for the use of "Can you" question ($\kappa = 0.42$). There was complete agreement between coders for the 12 remaining interviewer behaviors (Kappas = 1.00).

**Analyses.** A series of paired samples *t* tests were used to compare performance across the pre- and posttraining conditions. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine performance across the pretraining, posttraining and follow-up assessment conditions. Effects sizes were calculated as eta-squared ($\eta^2$), and Cohen's classifications of 0.01 as a small effect, 0.06 as a moderate effect, and 0.14 as a strong effect were used for interpretation (Pallant, 2013). For data that was not normally distributed, nonparametric tests (Wilcoxon's signed ranks and Friedman, respectively) were conducted. Effect sizes were calculated as *r* for nonparametric tests and Cohen's classification of 0.1 as a small effect, 0.3 as a medium effect, and 0.5 as a strong effect were used for interpretation (Pallant, 2013).

## Results

**Interviewer questions.** For each question type (open-ended, specific, and leading questions), a proportion score was calculated, representing the number of questions out of the total number of questions asked (pooled across all categories). Paired samples *t* tests revealed that for open-ended questions proportion scores increased from pretraining to posttraining, $t(91) = 10.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.57$, and declined over time for specific questions, $t(91) = 8.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.45$. Wilcoxon signed-ranks test indicated that the proportion of leading questions decreased significantly from pre- ($Mdn = 0.11$) to posttraining ($Mdn = .05$), $Z = -4.8$, $p < .001$, $r = .5$.

The analyses for open-ended questions were repeated with (a) minimal encouragers included, (b) absolute rather than proportion scores, and (c) the number of open-ended questions asked before the first specific question as the dependent variable. For all analyses, the pattern (significant increase in performance at the posttraining assessment interval) remained the same ($ps < .001$). The analyses were also repeated separately for the 52 trainees who were experienced in conducting investigative interviews with child witnesses and the 40 trainees who were novice interviewers. At the precommencement assessment, experienced interviewers asked significantly more open-ended questions than novice interviewers, $t(90) = 1.96$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$. The difference between groups had diminished by the posttraining assessment and was not significant, $t(90) = -0.41$, $p = .28$, $\eta^2 < 0.01$. Further, the analyses were repeated on participants within each jurisdiction separately. For all analyses, the pattern of findings was consistent. There was a significant increase in the use of open-ended questions coupled with significant decrease in the use of specific and leading questions across the two time intervals ($ps < .01$). Table 1 displays the mean proportion of each question type utilized within each subsample.

Thirty-nine of the trainees were available (at the time of this evaluation) to participate in a follow-up mock interview. These follow-up interviews were all scheduled 3 to 6 months after the completion of the training program. For the open-ended and spe-

Table 1
*Mean Proportion of Question Types Asked in Subsamples in Study 1*

| | Pretraining interviews (*SD*) | | | | | | | Posttraining interviews (*SD*) | | | | | | | Follow-up interviews (*SD*) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* | Open questions | | Specific questions | | Leading questions | | *N* | Open questions | | Specific questions | | Leading questions | | *N* | Open questions | | Specific questions | | Leading questions | |
| Jurisdiction 1 | 37 | .27 | (.18) | .57 | (.17) | .16 | (.13) | 37 | .60 | (.16) | .35 | (.16) | .05 | (.03) | 12 | .61 | (.14) | .34 | (.13) | .04 | (.03) |
| Jurisdiction 2 | 55 | .33 | (.21) | .57 | (.20) | .10 | (.11) | 55 | .56 | (.12) | .38 | (.11) | .06 | (.03) | 27 | .54 | (.15) | .42 | (.14) | .04 | (.04) |
| Novice trainees | 40 | .26 | (.17) | .58 | (.17) | .16 | (.10) | 40 | .58 | (.12) | .35 | (.11) | .07 | (.04) | 17 | .58 | (.13) | .38 | (.12) | .04 | (.03) |
| Experienced interviewers | 52 | .34 | (.22) | .56 | (.20) | .10 | (.12) | 52 | .57 | (.14) | .38 | (.15) | .05 | (.03) | 22 | .55 | (.17) | .41 | (.16) | .04 | (.04) |
| All participants | 92 | .30 | (.20) | .57 | (.19) | .13 | (.12) | 92 | .58 | (.14) | .36 | (.13) | .12 | (.06) | 39 | .56 | (.15) | .40 | (.14) | .04 | (.03) |

cific questions, one-way repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to compare performance across all three assessment sessions (i.e., pre-, post- and the 3–6 month follow- up). The proportions of leading questions across the three sessions were compared using a Friedman test. Overall, these analyses showed that the improvement in performance (i.e., increase in proportion of open-ended questions and decrease in proportion of specific and leading questions) was maintained over time. Significant effects were found for all three questions types [open-ended questions, $F(2, 37) = 14.56$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.44$; specific questions, $F(2, 37) = 10.5$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.36$; leading questions, $\chi^2(N = 39) = 9.19$, $p = .01$, $r = .32$]. Post hoc Bonferroni tests indicated that there was a significant difference in the proportion of open-ended questions asked pretraining ($M = 0.34$, $SD = 0.23$) and posttraining ($M = 0.58$, $SD = 0.15$), $p < .001$. However, there was no significant difference between posttraining and follow-up interviews ($M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.15$), $p = 1.0$. Similarly, there was a significant difference in specific questions utilized from pretraining ($M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.22$) to posttraining ($M = 0.36$, $SD = 0.15$), $p < .001$, but no significant difference from posttraining to the follow-up assessment ($M = 0.40$, $SD = 0.14$), $p = .66$. The decrease in the proportion of leading questions asked from pretraining ($Mdn = .07$) to posttraining interviews ($Mdn = 0.07$) was significant, $Z = -2.19$, $p = .03$, $r = .35$. Interestingly, the decrease in the proportion of leading questions asked in the posttraining to the follow-up interview ($Mdn = 0.04$) was also significant, $Z = -2.99$, $p = .003$, $r = .48$, indicating that performance continued to improve even after the training ceased.

**Interviewer behavior.** The second set of analyses determined whether the new training was associated with improvement in the interviewer behaviors (e.g., use of developmentally appropriate questions). The absolute proportion of preferred behaviors was calculated for each trainee (i.e., the proportion of behaviors exhibited out of all possible behaviors that could have been demonstrated in that interview). The absolute proportion of preferred behaviors increased significantly ($Z = -8.33$, $p < .001$, $r = .87$) from pre- ($Mdn = 0.39$) to posttraining ($Mdn = 0.85$). A Friedman test indicated a significant effect in the proportion of preferred behaviors exhibited at pretraining, posttraining, and follow-up interviews for 39 trainees, [$\chi^2(N = 92) = 53$, $p < .001$]. Post hoc Wilcoxon's tests indicated that posttraining interviews ($Mdn = .85$) had a significantly higher proportion of preferred interviews displayed than pretraining interviews ($Mdn = .42$), $Z = -5.37$, $p < .001$, $r = .43$. Further, a significant difference was found between posttraining and follow-up interviews ($Mdn = .92$), $Z = 2.69$, $p = .007$, $r = .31$, indicating that trainees continued to improve even after the training ceased.

## Study 2 (Field Interviews)

Two types of analyses were performed on field interviews, all conducted within the same jurisdiction. First, to examine whether the benefits of the training had transferred into the workplace, independent sample *t* tests and nonparametric Mann–Whitney *U* tests assessed the degree to which interviews conducted pre-versus posttraining were aligned with best-practice interviewing on five different measures. Second, to determine the degree to which fluctuations in performance had occurred prior to this intervention, a correlational analysis was conducted on adherence to open-ended question usage in each of the 5 years that preceded the training. If interviewers' use of open-ended questions remained stable across the 5 years, it provides additional support for any effects observed from pre- to posttraining.

### Method

**Interview assessment.** Fifty interviews from each of the 5 years prior to the training implementation (2009–2013) were randomly selected from a database that held thousands of archived child interviews. All the interviews had been conducted by qualified specialist child interviewers. From this pool of 250 interviews, 78 interviews (approximately 15 per year across a total of 45 interviewers) were randomly selected for comparison with 78 posttraining interviews. These posttraining interviews represented (at the time of this evaluation) all possible interviews conducted by 26 graduates of the program. The inclusion criteria for interviews were that the child was being interviewed about an allegation of abuse by one offender and had not previously been interviewed about the offense. In total, the 328 interviews (250 pretraining and 78 posttraining) involved 51 males and 277 females, aged 4 to 17 years ($M = 10.57$, $SD = 3.08$). All interviews were transcribed verbatim and de-identified prior to being included in this study.

**Measures.** Five measures were adopted: (a) interviewer questions, (b) interviewer behavior, (c) adherence to the interview protocol, (d) interview length, and (e) investigative questions. Interviewer questions and behavior were measured in the same way as in Study 1. The other measures are outlined below.

***Adherence to the interview protocol.*** A list of 19 interviewer behaviors was created, representing the various elements of the interview protocol. These behaviors assessed ability to: administer ground rules, involve the child in practice of a ground rule, identify a practice narrative event, elicit an episode of the practice event, maintain open-ended questions in the practice narrative, elicit the child's understanding of the interview purpose, identify the topic of concern, confirm prior information, establish whether the abuse was repeated, identify the number of abuse occurrences, exhaust

each occurrence, initiate a break before utilizing specific questions, identify what was said to any early complainant, and explore any further offenses. For each behavior that was administered appropriately, and where it was possible for the interviewer to demonstrate that behavior in the interview, 1 point was awarded.

***Interview length.*** The total length of interview in minutes, excluding breaks, was calculated. As interview length was associated with the number of occurrences of abuse discussed, a second measure of interview length was calculated by dividing the total length of the interview by the number of occurrences discussed. This measure represented the average time (minutes) spent talking about each occurrence.

***Investigative questions.*** A group of prosecutors and a detective were consulted in two face-to-face sessions, to create a list of details deemed essential for the successful investigation and prosecution of a child sexual abuse case. The details fell into six categories: the identity of the offender, the approximate time of the offense, the location, the offense type, possible witnesses and possible physical evidence. Interview transcripts were examined to identify whether all categories were addressed in the interview, either through open-ended or specific questions. One point was awarded for each category where the interviewer attempted to elicit a response. For each attempt, it was then noted whether the interviewer's request was appropriate (i.e., reflected developmentally appropriate language and concepts and refrained from questioning about irrelevant, minutiae details).

One person coded all transcripts and a second researcher coded 20% of these. Coders were blind as to whether the interview had been conducted prior to or after training. Interrater reliability analyses were measured using Cohen's Kappa to determine consistency among raters for each measure (excluding interview length). As with Study 1, Landis and Koch's (1977) were used for interpretation. Reliability was found to be substantial for investigative questions ($\kappa = .77$) and five behaviors related to adhering to the interview protocol [maintain open-ended questions in the practice narrative ($\kappa = 0.62$), confirm prior information ($\kappa = 0.71$), establish whether the abuse was repeated ($\kappa = 0.71$), identify the number of abuse occurrences ($\kappa = 0.83$), initiate a break before utilizing specific questions ($\kappa = 0.74$)]. There was complete agreement between raters for the remaining 11 behaviors that related to adherence to the protocol (Kappas = 1.00).

**Analyses.** A series of independent sample *t* tests were conducted to compare performance pre- and posttraining. ANOVAs were performed to compare interviews across pretraining, posttraining and at the 3–6 month follow-up. For data that was not normally distributed, nonparametric Mann–Whitney *U* and Kruskal-Wallis tests (respectively) were conducted. Five analyses were conducted, one for each separate measure of performance.

## Results

Table 2 presents the mean proportion of each of the measures (excluding interview length).

**Interviewer questions.** For the open-ended questions, a significant improvement from pre- to posttraining was evident, $t(154) = 20.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.73$. A significant decline across the assessment conditions was found in the proportion of specific [$t(154) = 17.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.68$] questions. A decline in the proportion of leading questions from pre- to posttraining was also evident, $Z = -5.05$, $p < .001$, $r = .04$. An additional analysis was conducted to confirm that pretraining interview performance had remained stable prior to the implementation of the new training. Fifty transcripts from each year between 2009 and 2013 (inclusive) were analyzed for question type. The relationship between the mean proportion of open-ended questions and year was investigated using Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient, revealing no statistically significant relationship between these two variables, $r = .05$, $N = 250$, $p = .45$.

To investigative whether the improvement in performance could be maintained in the posttraining interviews, two one-way between-groups ANOVAs (one for open-ended questions and one for specific questions) were performed to compare the three groups (pretraining, posttraining and follow-up interviews). This included interviews conducted up to 4 months posttraining (hereby labeled as "posttraining", *M* months = 1.25, *SD* = 1.29, *N* = 51) and all remaining interviews (hereby labeled as "follow-up," *M* months = 7.37, *SD* = 3.74, *N* = 27). These analyses revealed significant effects at the $p < .001$ level in the proportion of questions asked across the three interview types [open-ended, $F(2, 131) – 152.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.7$; specific, $F(2, 131) – 113.7$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.63$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey's HSD test indicated that the mean proportion of each question type asked at pretraining [open-ended (*M* = 0.10, *SD* = 0.04); specific (*M* = 0.82, *SD* = 0.06) was significantly different from posttraining [open-ended (*M* = 0.40, *SD* = 0.13), $p < .001$; specific (*M* = 0.56, *SD* = 0.13), $p < .001$]. However, there was no significant difference between posttraining and follow-up assessment [open-ended (*M* = 0.40, *SD* = 0.11), $p = 1.0$; specific (*M* = 0.55, *SD* = 0.11), $p = .94$]. For the leading questions, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed and also found to be significant, $\chi^2(N = 156) = 24.05$, $p < .001$. A

Table 2
*Mean Proportion of Question Type, Preferred Behaviour Exhibited, Protocol Elements Correctly Administered, and Categories of Essential Information Sought by the Interviewer in Study 2*

| | *N* | Pretraining interviews (*SD*) | | *N* | Posttraining interviews (*SD*) | | *N* | Follow-up interviews (*SD*) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Open questions | 78 | .10 | (.04) | 78 | .40 | (.12) | 27 | .40 | (.11) |
| Specific questions | 78 | .83 | (.05) | 78 | .56 | (.12) | 27 | .55 | (.11) |
| Leading questions | 78 | .08 | (.05) | 78 | .04 | (.03) | 27 | .05 | (.05) |
| Preferred behaviors exhibited | 78 | .46 | (.09) | 78 | .81 | (.14) | | | |
| Correctly administered protocol elements | 78 | .32 | (.10) | 78 | .94 | (.07) | | | |
| Investigative questions | 78 | .94 | (.10) | 78 | .95 | (.09) | | | |
| Appropriate questioning techniques | 78 | .14 | (.18) | 78 | .92 | (.14) | | | |

post hoc comparison using the Mann–Whitney $U$ test indicated that the proportion of leading questions decreased significantly from pretraining to posttraining, $Z = -4.65$, $p < .001$, $r = .37$. There was no significant different between posttraining and the follow up assessment, $Z = -0.95$, $p = .34$, $r = .07$.

**Interview behavior and adherence to protocol.** There was a significant increase in the proportion of interviewer behaviors from pretraining to posttraining, $Z = -10.18$, $p < .001$, $r = .82$. The same pattern was found for an analysis on the proportion of correctly administered elements from the protocol included in each interview transcript. There was a significant increase in adherence to the interview protocol from pretraining to posttraining, $Z = -10.84$, $p < .001$, $r = .87$.

**Interview length.** For seven posttraining transcripts, the interview times were not recorded and thus these transcripts were excluded. For the remaining 71 post- and 78 pretraining interviews, a significant decrease in interview length was revealed after training [$M$ pretraining = 65.49, $SD$ = 29.68; $M$ posttraining = 41.30, $SD$ = 22.75, $t(147) = 5.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.17$]. The time spent discussing each occurrence also significantly decreased from $M$ = 46.86 minutes ($SD$ = 20.31) pretraining to $M$ = 22.91 minutes ($SD$ = 9.98) posttraining, $t(147) = 8.99$, $p = < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.36$.

**Investigative questions.** A Mann–Whitney $U$ test indicated no significant difference in the information sought by interviewers from pre- to posttraining, $Z = -0.81$, $p = .42$, $r = .06$. In other words, despite the changes in other measures, the interviewers were equally diligent in pursuing the key evidential details. However, when the appropriateness of questioning techniques was analyzed, a significant difference between pre- and posttraining was evident, $Z = -10.9$, $p < .001$, $r = .88$, indicating that the techniques utilized to elicit important evidential information were more appropriate after training.

## Discussion

The current findings provide clear support for the utility of the training system evaluated in this study. The most important indicator of best-practice interviewing is adherence to open-ended questions, and this training was associated with a significant increase, along with relatively high posttraining rates, in the use of these questions. For the mock interviews, the mean proportion of open-ended questions increased from 30% at pretraining to 58% at posttraining. For the field interviews, the mean proportion of these questions increased fourfold from 10% pre- to 40% posttraining. These strong results need to be considered in light of the fact that a highly conservative measure of open-ended questions was used. Whereas some researchers define open-ended questions as any question that invites an elaborate response from the child (e.g., Cederborg et al., 2013; Cyr & Lamb, 2009; Dion & Cyr, 2008), the definition used in the current study included questions that encouraged a narrative response but without dictating what specific information was required. For example, questions that prompt the child to provide a description of a person (e.g., "Tell me all about Dan") or ask how the abuse occurred (e.g., 'Tell me how he touched you") were assigned to the specific question category.

Importantly, improvements in performance were sustained at the 3–6 month follow-up mock interview assessment and for up to 12 months in the field. Most interviewer evaluation studies have demonstrated some posttraining improvement, yet few have shown long-term maintenance of interviewer skills after training or supervision has ceased (Cederborg et al., 2013; Cyr & Lamb, 2009; Dion & Cyr, 2008; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin et al., 2002; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz et al., 2002; Powell, Fisher, & Hughes-Scholes, 2008b; see Table S1). For example, Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin et al. (2002) found that trainees' adherence to best-practice interview guidelines decreased significantly 6 months after supervision and feedback was terminated. Smith et al. (2009) showed that officers who had graduated from their interviewer-training course with good open-ended question usage were at 1 month posttraining no better at adhering to open-ended questions than officers who had received no formal training in interviewing children at all. What the current study showed is that long-term maintenance of interviewing skills is not just about the prevalence of feedback and supervision in the months after the course ceases. The structure of the training program itself also impacts skill maintenance.

In addition to the follow-up assessments, the strengths of this design were the large and heterogeneous sample of trainees, and the use of multiple performance measures and assessment contexts. Prior studies have tended to use experienced interviewers and have focused primarily on open-ended question usage. When examining the effect of this training program across different subsamples and measures, the findings were robust. Specifically, the improvements from pre- to posttraining were observed across two independent jurisdictions, for experienced and novice interviewers, for both mock and field interviews, and irrespective of how open-ended questions were measured. The improvement in open-ended question usage after training was also associated with an improvement in all of the measures of best-practice interviewing. The proportion of positive behaviors demonstrated by trainees (e.g., appropriate choice of open-ended questions and use of developmentally appropriate language) significantly improved from pre- to posttraining in the mock and field interview settings. Further, compared with pretraining interviews, posttraining field interviews displayed greater adherence to the interview protocol, and they were significantly shorter in length even though there were no changes in the amount of critical evidential information pursued. Collectively, the findings have addressed key concerns raised by different players in the justice system; concerns from eyewitness memory experts about insufficient opportunity for narrative detail as well as complaints from prosecutors and witnesses about longwinded, interrogative and overly complex interviewing (Burrows & Powell, 2014; Cashmore & Trimboli, 2005; McConachy, 2002; Lamb et al., 2007, 2008; Lyon, 2010; Powell & Snow, 2007; Saywitz et al., 2011; Sternberg et al., 1996).

So what contributed to the success of the current training system over previous evaluation studies that showed a more rapid drop off in performance, and over the previous training in these jurisdictions that had produced low base rates? No definitive answer can be offered because the current training system differed from other programs on many dimensions—the content as well as the nature of the course delivery. Nonetheless, given that some previous studies (using classroom-based models) have shown improvements in open-ended question usage during their courses, the sustained improvements may be due in large part to the distributed learning style (involving incremental development of skills) and the multiple opportunities for deliberate, short-intensity practice.

One of the most robust and best-documented findings in memory research is that training yields longer retention if practice opportunities are spaced over a long period of time (Baddeley & Longman, 1978; Bjork & Allen, 1970; Bahrick, 2000; Bruce & Bahrick, 1992; Dempster, 1988; Schmidt & Bjork, 1992). Learning that occurs across multiple, strategically spaced training sessions allows deeper and more conceptual learning, more robust encoding of information, and better long-term memory (see Son & Simon, 2012 for review). Massed practice, on the other hand, prevents learners from processing information as thoroughly as is required for long-term retention of knowledge (Schmidt & Bjork, 1992; Son, 2004).

The implication of the current findings for government organizations is that there is now an evidence-based alternative to the traditional classroom-based training system for investigative interviewers. This is good news for those organizations with limited budgets and staff spread over large geographic regions. When excluding the costs of writing and developing the materials, the training system was no more costly to run than the previous short-term classroom-based training where most of the budgets were spent on travel, accommodation, and other requirements associated with the abstraction of large numbers of trainee interviewers into the classroom (Powell, 2002, 2013). The main costs associated with this course were technological support, the hiring of actors, the maintenance of the management system, and the evaluation of interviewer performance. It also needs to be considered that the training would have led to cost savings in other areas. Shorter interviews are associated with lower interview transcription costs. The provision of ready-made training activities and resources allow in-house trainers to focus on supporting trainee interviewers, as opposed to writing and delivering course content. Further, computerized assessment allows easier evaluation and monitoring of individual skills over time.

There are four suggestions for future research. First, replication of the current study is needed in other jurisdictions, particularly in light of the low sample size at the follow-up assessment and moderate intercoder agreement for one of the performance measures (ability to avoid "can you" questions). Second, researchers need to isolate the relative effectiveness of face-to-face training and e-learning, while controlling as much as possible for content of the training system. A third suggestion relates to variability in trainee interviewer performance. The gains made throughout the course were not equivalent for all individuals. However, for the current and prior evaluations, the design focused on measurement of group, rather than individual, stability. Group stability focuses on the intraindividual stability over time, assessed by measuring the relationship between two measures of the construct at a given point (Roebers & Schneider, 2002). In contrast, individual stability focuses on variation in stability between individuals (Wohlwill, 1973). Understanding which determinants mediate differences in individual stability could be useful for deciding which employees to recruit into the training and which will need the closest monitoring.

The final issue, which was raised by the industry partners who took part in this research, relates to the frequency and nature of support (if any) that should be offered to trainees after completion of the program. Although performance was maintained at 6 months postcourse completion, this should not be taken to imply that it would remain stable if no intervention was offered in the months after follow-up assessments. The issue of support is likely to be complex, determined by a wide array of organizational, individual, and workload factors as well as trainees' exposure to, and support of best-practice interviewing within the broader workplace after training completion. Given the current global financial climate where government organizations are under increasing pressure to minimize cost, it may be wise to move away from "one-size-fits-all" posttraining supervision models. The learning management system used to track individuals during the course could potentially be used to present brief follow-up activities to screen individuals in most need of further supervision.

In conclusion, evaluation research in the area of investigative interviewing has focused primarily on determining whether individual training programs can promote adherence to best-practice guidelines and whether improvements can be sustained many months after training has been completed. While prior research has had limited success in skill maintenance, this evaluation has shown excellent results across a range of measures and time frames. These findings potentially mark the beginning of a new era in interviewer training delivery and research. With the new system, trainees can now access high-quality materials and practical exercises in their own private learning environments. Further, researchers can better coordinate efforts in answering finely tuned research questions about the format, nature, and order of individualized activities needed to maximize investigative interviewing performance. Broader support for the e-learning model may be useful in advancing scientific endeavors because the content, format, quality, and delivery of training and assessment tasks can be easily controlled and student performance easily monitored.

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## Appendix

## Overview of the Specialist Vulnerable Witness Forensic Interview Training System

| Module title | Objectives | Description of activities |
|---|---|---|
| Establishing what constitutes best-practice interviewing | Understand the impact of various question styles.<br>Identify the elements of an effective training program in interviewing children, along with its benefits. | Interview with colleague to experience different question styles.<br>Reading on rationale for course structure and focus.<br>Commentaries and film clips of children being interviewed about an innocuous event, highlighting the effect of various questions. |
| Defining the various questions | Distinguish between open-ended versus specific questions and non-\leading versus leading questions.<br>Recognize the various subtypes of open-ended questions. | Learning of coding protocol.<br>Mock interview transcripts used to identify question types.<br>Quiz on various question types. |
| Understanding memory and language development | Have a clear definition of various skills and abilities that develop throughout childhood and understand how they manifest in the interview setting.<br>Have an awareness of the implications of developmental limitations in memory and language for the interview process. | Narrative PowerPoint explaining language development in maltreated children.<br>Commentaries and film clips of children being interviewed about an innocuous event, highlighting developmental concepts.<br>Quizzes on developmental concepts. |
| Choosing the most effective open-ended questions | Recognize the most appropriate open-ended question among several possible alternatives. | Reading and film on eliciting a free narrative recall.<br>Interview virtual child on computer-simulated program.<br>Commentaries and film clips of children being interviewed about an innocuous event, highlighting the benefits of open-ended questions. |
| Putting the right questions into practice | Automatically retrieve the various types of open-ended questions that can be used in an interview.<br>Insert ground rules into appropriate places throughout the interview.<br>Incorporate minimal encouragers into interviewing technique. | Rote learning exercise to practice open-ended questions stems.<br>Mock interviews with colleagues.<br>Commentaries and film clips of children being interviewed about an innocuous event, highlighting the effect of various questions. |
| Introducing the topic of concern and eliciting a disclosure | Identify which techniques are most useful in eliciting disclosures of abuse from children.<br>Generate questions that may be useful (in certain case scenarios) for eliciting disclosures of abuse from a child. | Exercise in developing questions to introduce the topic of concern.<br>Quiz on techniques to elicit a disclosure.<br>Commentaries and film clips of children being interviewed about an innocuous event, highlighting effect of disclosure techniques.<br>Interview with actor playing the role of the abused child. |
| Assessing your progress | Identify how performance has improved in this course to date. | Electronically recorded interview with actor playing the role of the abused child.<br>Exercise to transcribe, code and reflect on own interview. |
| Introducing the interview protocol | Be familiar with the new interview protocol and its various elements.<br>Competently administer the interview protocol in a mock interview setting. | Reading of the interview protocol and the rationale behind the development of this.<br>Interview with actor playing the role of the abused child, using the interview protocol. |
| Interviewing about repeated abuse | Understand the effect of repeated experience on children's memory and suggestibility.<br>Discriminate between temporally-versus content-leading questions.<br>Understand the meaning of episodic and generic information and how to recognize these in a transcript.<br>Identify how individual occurrences of a repeated event are distinguished in an interview. | Reading and quizzes on:<br>– common problems when interviewing about repeated abuse<br>– concepts related to repeated abuse<br>– how to interview about repeated abuse. |

(*Appendix continues*)

Appendix (*continued*)

| Module title | Objectives | Description of activities |
|---|---|---|
| | Identify interview procedures for enhancing the accuracy and detail of children's accounts of occurrences of a repeated event. | Interview with actor playing the role of the repeatedly abused child, using the interview protocol. |
| Evidentiary requirements | Understand the local legislation around child abuse. | Readings, PowerPoints and quizzes on legislation around child sexual abuse. |
| | Judge when to follow up on specific terms and details. | Reading and quizzes on prosecutor requirements of particularization.<br>Exercise around what further information should be followed up on.<br>Interview with actor playing the role of the abused child, using the interview protocol. |
| Understanding relationship evidence | Understand the dynamics of sexual offending and counter-intuitive behavior. | Film showing case example of grooming. |
| | Understand the effect of the offending "relationship: on victims. | Exercise on understanding of grooming evident in the film. |
| | Understand the application of the "Whole Story" concept in taking statements and conducting interviews with victims of sexual offending, both child and adult. | Readings on:<br>– the "Whole Story" framework<br>– theories of offending<br>– victims' responses to trauma. |
| Considering cross-cultural issues | Identify the essential elements of an interview with witnesses from cultural minority backgrounds. | Readings and quizzes on interviewing children from different cultures. |
| | Use interpreters appropriately and know how to assess their need. | Film highlighting common issues that arise when interviewing Aboriginal children and how to adapt the interview process appropriately.<br>Interview with actor playing the role of the abused child, using the interview protocol. |
| Interviewing witnesses with complex communication support needs (CCN) | Identify elements of an effective interview with witnesses who have complex communication support needs. | Reading and quiz on interviewing witnesses with CCN and how to adapt the interview process. |
| | Understand the key features of one type of communication impairment and how to accommodate the interview process for a witness with that impairment. | Film of adults and children with CCN being interviewed about an innocuous event, highlighting the effect of various questions.<br>Exercise researching the features of a communication impairment group and how to adapt an interview for a witness with this impairment. |
| A guide to recording the interview process | Identify several techniques designed to improve verbatim note taking. | Reading on how to take contemporaneous notes.<br>Full interview with actor playing the role of the abused child. |
| Putting it all together | Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the information presented in the previous modules. | Full interview with actor playing the role of the abused child. |
| | Demonstrate adherence to best-practice guidelines of interviewing child witnesses. | Quizzes on coding and previous modules.<br>Written evaluation of an interview transcript. |

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