



Update

Investigation and Prosecution of Child Fatalities and Physical Abuse

June 23-27, 2014 Baltimore, MD

Investigation and Prosecution of Child Fatalities and Physical Abuse is a five-day course designed to specifically meet the needs of frontline child abuse professionals including: prosecutors; investigators; social service and child protection workers; child advocacy staff; medical and mental health professionals; emergency response personnel; and victim/witness advocates. Travel, lodging, and per diem expenses are the responsibility of the attendee.

ChildProtect: Trial Advocacy for Civil Child Protection Attorneys

July 14-18, 2014

National Child Protection Training Center, Winona, Minnesota

This course is by application only. 30 attorneys will be selected to attend. Application deadline is May 14, 2014.

ChildProtect is an intensive 5-day trial advocacy course designed for 30 child protection prosecutors/attorneys handling civil child dependency cases. Students will participate in a mock trial to terminate parental rights with the assistance of 10 child protection prosecutors and specialists experienced in trial advocacy. The mock trial fact pattern addresses complex medical and psychological issues, including abusive head trauma and psychological profiling. It is based on an actual case involving head trauma injuries to an 18-month-old child, and includes numerous family dynamic issues and the ultimate question of who was responsible. The mock trial will raise issues involving ethics, when to terminate parental rights, and how to effectively handle defense expert testimony.

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Recent Changes to The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol

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The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocols are some of the most widely used in the U.S. with 32% of Children’s Advocacy Centers reporting receiving training in The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ and 31% reporting training in our RATAAC® Protocol (The Midwest Regional Children’s Advocacy Center, 2013). Since CornerHouse provided our first week-long forensic interview training in 1990, the field of forensic interviewing has matured from relative infancy to the more established and increasingly cohesive level of practice we see today. As with every quality interview protocol, the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ has evolved and changed with the field. For the CornerHouse Protocol, significant evolution has occurred over the past few years. This article seeks to clarify the CornerHouse Protocol as it has evolved, as it exists today, and as it is taught in the CornerHouse Training Program.

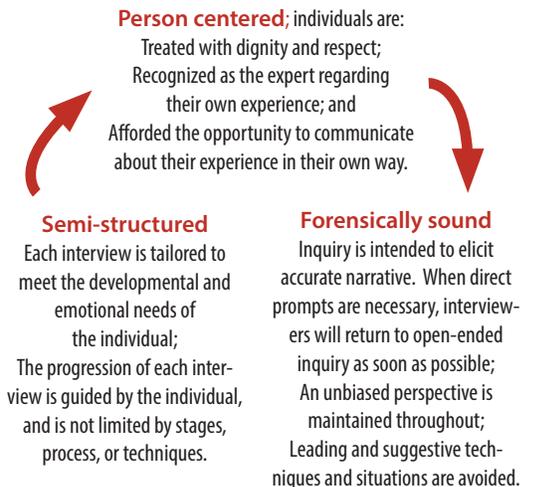
Recent Adaptations

The past three years have brought significant change and innovation to the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™. In 2012, CornerHouse completed a program evaluation on the application of narrative practice techniques; began implementation of enhanced orienting messages; increased our use of open invitations early in the interview; and re-defined our approach to closure. The totality of recent changes and some historical misunderstanding in the field about the CornerHouse Protocol led us to analyze the way we identify and communicate about the Protocol’s stages to ensure the best fit between these identifiers and our current practice.

Through discussion, education and literature review, CornerHouse interviewers have arrived at an adapted description of the CornerHouse Protocol. We believe these adaptations better capture the recent changes and more effectively represent the developmental considerations we have taught and implemented for many years.

CornerHouse recognizes three principles that guide our forensic interviews, outlined in Figure 1. Above all else, the CornerHouse Protocol is person centered, forensically sound and semi-structured.

Figure 1
Guiding Principles of the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™



The current CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ includes four distinct stages: *Build*

Rapport, Seek Information, Explore Statements and End Respectfully. As seen in Table 1, each stage includes its own purpose.

Table 1
CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™

Build Rapport	
Purpose	To establish a foundation for the interview process by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Orienting the individual Learning about the individual Facilitating the individual's best possible functioning
Seek Information	
Purpose	To provide an opportunity for the individual to report their experience
Explore Statements	
Purpose	To allow the individual to share details of their experience
End Respectfully	
Purpose	To provide a respectful closure to and transition from the interview by attending to the individual's: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation Communicated experience Observed needs

Narrative Approach

The CornerHouse Protocol advocates for a narrative approach to information-seeking and the use of narrative practice techniques in rapport building. One of the primary tenets of the CornerHouse Protocol is that the process should be child-led. That is, the child should be afforded the opportunity to tell in his or her own way and the information provided in the interview should be from the child. A narrative approach that encourages the child to articulate his experience to the best of his developmental ability is integral to this process. Since 2005, CornerHouse has specifically taught interviewers to use opportunities to build narrative during rapport building as a means to understand the child's functioning and increase a child's propensity to give narrative later in the interview (CornerHouse, 2005).

The research support for the use of open-ended questions in forensic interviews is clearly evident (Hershkowitz, 2009; Lamb & Brown, 2006; Lamb, Hershkowitz, & Sternberg, 1996; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin, Stewart, & Mitchell, 2003; Lyon, 2010; Sternberg et al, 1997). While narrative invitation, or, practice techniques are now used in many forensic interview protocols (Cordisco-Steele, 2010; Saywitz, Lyon, & Goodman, 2011), little research has been conducted on the impact of narrative practice techniques across different protocols. In September of 2011, and in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, School of Social Work, CornerHouse

began a study to evaluate the use of specific episodic memory training in the CornerHouse Protocol. Comprehensive results of this study have been accepted for publication.

Truth and Lie Discussions and Interview Instructions (Orienting Statements)

CornerHouse continues to recognize the implementation of truth/lie assessments and the promise to tell the truth as decisions that are highly influenced by jurisdictional/community standards. In 2001, CornerHouse began teaching students in our training program (CornerHouse, 2001) about the Reality Task developed by Lyon and Saywitz (1999). In 2005, we started distributing the Lyon and Saywitz article to our students as recommended reading (CornerHouse, 2005). In recent years we have focused more discussion in our training program on the promise to tell the truth pursuant to new research.

CornerHouse practice and training have historically been rooted in the belief that interview instructions are best incorporated as the situation arises, utilizing developmentally appropriate, concrete statements that are relevant within the context of the interview. For example, when the child corrects the interviewer, this is acknowledged ("thank you for correcting me") and reinforced with an instruction provided to the child ("if I get something else wrong, let me know, just like you did"). In addition, CornerHouse has always recommended some orienting statements at the interview's outset, although these have historically been limited to providing the child with information regarding other unique elements of the interview setting, such as video recording and observers, as well as messages regarding the interviewer's role.

Given the potential value of providing some additional orienting or instructional messages early within the forensic interview, CornerHouse has begun to incorporate specific orienting statements, added as a planned activity during the introductory portion of forensic interviews. Because the forensic interview is a novel experience for most children, these statements have been designed to provide the child with an orientation to the culture of the interview. The orienting statements are simple, brief and incorporated into all interviews with slight developmental modifications. Messages are reinforced throughout the interview, based upon individual presenting factors and opportunities. In continued partnership with the University of Minnesota School of Social Work, we have recently completed a program evaluation to assess the impact of these messages on child behavior in the interview.

Approach to the Topic of Inquiry

While CornerHouse has always approached the topic of concern with children ten and older by inviting the child to tell the interviewer what she or he knows about the interview and its purpose, in recent years we have increased our use of this and similar open invitations early in the interview with younger children as well. CornerHouse continues to advocate for and teach a person-centered and forensically sound approach that should be adjusted based not only on development but also on the individual child.

Conclusion

Practice guidelines recommend that interviewers adapt their language, pacing, and other aspects of the interview to the particular child with whom the interview is conducted (APSAC, 2012). In any field where best practice dictates a tailored approach to meet client needs, best practice will continue to comprise a range of specific behaviors and

decisions. The challenge for forensic interview protocols and guidelines are to communicate parameters that can be used to encourage good practice and minimize interviewer errors, while allowing enough flexibility for interviewers to tailor their approach to the individual child and situation. The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ is one avenue by which to explore a child's experience in a way that is both forensically sound and respects the child's individuality. We hope recent

changes prove to clarify our practices and provide a tool to forensic interviewers that is both flexible and guides forensically sound practice.

An extended version of this issue has been published at Anderson, J. N. (Fall, 2013). The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol: An Evolution in Practice for Almost 25 Years. *APSAC Advisor*, 25(4), 2-7.

Jennifer Anderson is currently the Associate Director at CornerHouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota where she has conducted numerous forensic interviews of children regarding allegations of sexual or physical abuse, neglect or witness to violent crime. Ms. Anderson has authored multiple works and held primary responsibility for the creation of a video recording and booklet on forensic interviewing. Ms. Anderson speaks at national conferences and provides extensive training courses to diverse groups of multi-disciplinary professionals including training the investigators from the International Criminal Court in child interview techniques, multi-disciplinary professionals in Chennai, Delhi and Bangalore, India as well as those in Tokyo, Japan. Ms. Anderson has represented Ms. Anderson has represented CornerHouse on various advisory committees, Think Tanks and Boards of Directors.

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