



## Child Sex Trafficking Screening vs Forensic Interviews

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### What does a CSEC victim look like?



 National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College

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### Issues

- Screenings attempt to **identify** possible indicators or a level of concern of CST for high risk children
- Forensic interviews address specific concerns of CST and gather detailed information to inform safety decisions and investigative activities

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## Similarities & Differences

- Not diagnostic
- Not the only source of information for decision making
- Closed-ended vs open-ended
- The source of the info differs

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## Screenings

- Often gather information around domains that are known indicators
  - Health and appearance
  - Behavior
  - Having money, gifts, material things
  - Relationships and living arrangements
  - Trauma and abuse
  - Environment

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## Screenings (cont.)

- Absences
- Running away
- Tattoos
- Drugs
- Older friend/boyfriend/girlfriend
- Suspicious markings/bruises
- Change in behavior

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## Validated Screening Tools

- Vera  
(<https://www.vera.org/publications/out-of-the-shadows-identification-of-victims-of-human-trafficking>)
- West Coast Children’s Clinic  
Commercial Sexual Exploitation  
Identification Tool  
(<http://www.westcoastcc.org/cse-it/>)




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## Forensic Interviews

- Sometimes there are known CST activities
- Sometimes there is evidence
- Sometimes suspicion is high but there are no known CST activities




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## Forensic Interviews (cont.)

- Conducted for partners on the MDT
- Seek to provide context to known concerns/indicators/evidence
- Engage (typically one-on-one) with the child/teen with observers
- Are a part of a larger investigation




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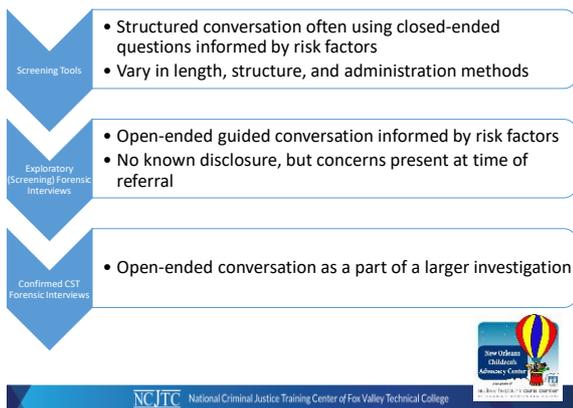
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### Exploratory (Screening) FI vs. Forensic Interview Pre- interview Considerations

- Referral Source
- Ongoing investigation?
- FI monitor
- Reporting
- MDT agreement
- Involvement of additional parties beyond traditional MDT

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### Exploratory (Screening) FI vs. Forensic Interview Pre- interview Considerations (cont.)

- Timing of FI
- Basic needs met
  - Eaten?
  - Slept?
  - Medical care?
- Information gathering prior to FI

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## Additional Dynamics

- Often your victim has been picked up for a criminal offense
- Safe Harbor Laws – “kids not criminals”
- Drug and alcohol use
- Physical abuse/DV
- Lying for survival (renaming, age, etc.)
- Threats made that child knows will be carried out

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## Preparing for the Interview

- Who will conduct the interview?
- Where?
- Timing (& length) of the interview
  - Passing of baton from MDT...
- Maximizing positive outcomes
  - Privacy, respect, comfort
- Securing the location
- Managing risks (runaway? other?)

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## Preparing for the Interview

- Discuss with LE what information is being sought for the interview
- Are there pending charges against the child and what is the plan for charges?
- Know the child’s status and potential plan post interview for the child
- Language comes with the territory: are you ready?
- How will you handle denial?

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## Prep (continued)

- Note child’s attitude prior to interview
- Has child taken drugs recently/is child high?
- What do you know about child’s home life/history? How might it impact the interview?
- Will there be a pre-interview or time with child prior to formal forensic interview?
  - If so, how will you document and defend this?



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## Creating a Comfortable Space



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## Content Pieces for Both

- Possible Screening Topics:
  - How are basic needs met?
  - People who help? Friends? Acquaintances, etc.?
  - Home life
  - Triggers for running
  - Social Media/ Technology
  - Anyone child is worried about? Other kids?

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## Creating Questions

- Think about the concern identified and generate an open-ended prompt to discuss the concern
  - Grades falling, truancy, absenteeism, change in peer groups, running away
  - Drugs/alcohol, cell phones, gifts, tattoos
- Use externally verifiable information in prompts
- Don't create questions that invite denial

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## Things to Consider

- Victim Centered Language
- Barriers
- The "Exchange" Question
- Multiple Sessions/Contacts
- Objective Empathy
- Kindness and Respect

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## Questions and Problem Solving

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