

## FOLLOWING THE EVIDENCE IN THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION FORENSIC INTERVIEW

Julie Kenniston, MSW, LISW  
julie.kenniston@gmail.com



### What are we talking about?

- The commercial sexual exploitation of a minor (under 18yo)
- An adult or older child benefits by receiving money, goods or services by selling a child for a sex act
- This content will refer to domestic children (those from the USA)

National Criminal Justice Training Center

### Familial vs Non-familial

- Dynamics are different
  - Recruitment, maintenance (non-familial)
- Care, custody and control
  - Access to child
  - Response of the system

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Difference between these and other interviews

- We know more at the start
- And sometimes we know less...
- Our target is different
- Maslow's Hierarchy plays out differently
- Suggestibility plays out differently
- These are typically longer
- Additional interviews might be necessary
  - Multiple meetings... not always interviews
- Use of confrontation or evidence

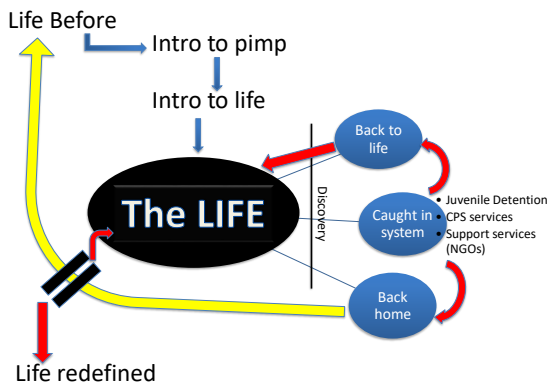
National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Context for HT FIs

- Traffic stops
- LE conversations
- Pre (prep) conversations (LE, FI or VicAdv)
- How does the FI fit in and what are the dynamics?
  - CAFI or HSI?
  - At what point are you interviewing?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

5



National Criminal Justice Training Center

6

### Each of these moments contain details

This content is  
evidence

National Criminal Justice Training Center

7

### Are you equipped to handle these cases?

- Think about the traditional cases that FIs see
  - 1x\*, recorded, neutral, kind, conversational, non-leading, non-confrontational
- Requires understanding of the implications of being direct or confrontational, and multiple contacts

National Criminal Justice Training Center

### 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

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## More Dynamics

- Control by the pimp
- Trauma bonds
- Story is the same, rules are the same because it is a business model\*
- Figuring out how to confront denial
- Knowing how to use evidence or externally derived information

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## How are they similar?

- Timing makes a difference
- Art makes a difference
- Narrative event practice makes a difference
- Silence makes a difference
- Framing first and asking second makes a difference
- Both might be intrafamilial

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## HT Interviews

- Script vs event (remember the file folders)
- Because there is so much going on in the life of the HT victim, the interviewer will need to make some choices about how to track incidents
- Clarification is key

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## 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?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## 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?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Engagement and Orientation

- Figure out what child wants to be called in interview; inquire about names and child's age
- Check in to see how child is doing
- Explain your role, documentation, observers
- Ask child to share some things about self
- Employ interview instructions conversationally
- NEP

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Interview Instructions

- Correct me
- I promise that there are things that you will say that I will need you to explain. If I say something that you need me to explain, let me know.
- I am not going to guess today. Same goes for you. If you don't know the answer to something, don't guess.
- If there is something you don't want to tell me, just tell me that.

National Criminal Justice Training Center

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Truth

- I promise you that I will tell you the truth.
- Do you promise that you will tell the truth while we are talking?
- If you feel like you can't tell me the truth, tell me that.

National Criminal Justice Training Center

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NEP

- Pick a decent topic
  - Neutral\*, non-abusive EVENT
- Ask follow up narratives
- Pay attention to clues
- LISTEN
- Be aware that this sets the pace and process of interview
- Keep it as fact-based as possible
  - Not what child wishes, or assumes

National Criminal Justice Training Center

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NEP (continued)

- Get baseline from NEP
- Gauge child's willingness and ability to talk
- Note things that draw child out
- Note things that are avoided
- What is not said can be as important as what is said
- Take the one down position so child can educate you, but don't be walked over

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## BE CONVERSATIONAL

- Because the interview is a conversation there are some potential pitfalls
- Closed-ended inquiries (esp. early on)
- Some engagement techniques may seem suggestive out of context
  - Complimenting smile, eyes, hair or nails
- Pay attention to what you are doing to engage

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Hints

- Use child's words
  - Don't say "prostitute and pimp"
- Inquire about meaning for words and phrases

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Decision to make...

- Inquiries about child's life prior to pimp
- Assessing drug/alcohol use
- Self disclosure
  - This is a purist approach...

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Bridge to Substantive Content

- "I understand that you got picked up this weekend. Tell me all about that."
- "Tell me what you know about being here today."
- Assess concerns
  - What is child's relationship to prior home life/caregivers?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Content = Corroboration (Relationship/grooming)

- How/where did child and pimp meet?
- How did relationship start? How did child feel about pimp? (establish pimp's identity)
- How did they communicate?
- Who else was a part of the relationship?
- Who knew about the relationship?
- Have child talk about when things were very good (then later, talk about the change)
  - Gifts, promises, possessions

National Criminal Justice Training Center



### **Content = Corroboration (Identification)**

- "Tell me how old he thought you were."
- "Tell me about that conversation."
- IDs (where are they/who keeps them?)
- Names used
- Identification of pimp
- Identification of witnesses/others
- Identification of johns (based on LE)

National Criminal Justice Training Center

### **Content = Corroboration (Medical)**

- Has child ever been to the hospital? Use or been prescribed meds? Been treated by a clinic or doctor? Any injuries (treated or untreated)?
  - STI? Condoms/no condoms?
- Assess for pregnancy or childbirth (abortion?); inquire about details
  - What are dynamics? Who cares for child? Can she see child? Is child used as a threat?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

26

### **Content = Corroboration (the life)**

- How did child know what to do? If someone taught child, who and how?
- What were the rules (money/other)? How was that communicated?
  - Quota/pay scale
  - What would happen if quota wasn't met?
- How was it communicated where to be and what to do?
- Transportation? Travel? Vehicles?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

### **Content = Corroboration (Communication)**

- Names used
- Code words
- Technology used
- Rules for communication
- Marketing/communication with "customers"

National Criminal Justice Training Center

28

### **Content = Corroboration (Child's support/options)**

- Who does child rely on/talk with/trust and why?
- Communication with family?
- Access to education? Attending school?
- Concerns
- What to do when arrested/picked up? How does child know what to do?

National Criminal Justice Training Center

29

### **Content = Corroboration (Housing)**

- Housing (where does child stay/sleep?)
  - If child lived at home, how was "life" accessed?
  - If child is transient or runaway, what are details?
- Roommates/witnesses (identities)
- Possessions (What did child have? Where was it kept?)

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Rewards and Punishments

- How earned?
- Financial support
- Gifts
- Love/affection
- Attention
- Promotion
- Activities
  - Hair, nails, clothes
- Expectations
  - Quota?
- Threats
- Weapons
- Gang activity
- Rape/violence
- Drugs
- Coping...

National Criminal Justice Training Center

31

## Content = Corroboration

- Inquire about jewelry, tattoos, markings, branding
- Talk about times child feels most safe
- Talk about if child has experienced or witnessed violence; punishment; gang activity
- Advertising (online or other, who took pics?)
- Pics/videos (details about computers, cell phones)

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Hints

- If child says "boyfriend or daddy" delve into this
- If child narrates fully and leaves out a part, frame first and ask second (time segmentation)
- If child shuts down, note the content of interview at the time and conduct block removal or circle back later
- Frame observer questions in the context that you have engaged throughout the interview
  - Not just a list of closed-ended questions

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## How do you ask these questions?

- Use the hourglass approach
- Narrative!
- "Help me understand..."
- Dates, times and locations...
  - Movement/transport/relocations
- Starting with *where* might help
  - 5 senses

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Considerations

- Understand the details needed by law enforcement (pimps vs. johns, or both?)
- Event vs. script issues
- Consistently frame first/ask second
- If needed, reverse CI
- Familial vs. nonfamilial offenders

National Criminal Justice Training Center

35

## Ending the Interview

- Check in before you check out
  - "How are you doing?"
  - Assess safety
- Leave the door open for future conversations
- "Is there something I forgot to ask you or something you think I should know?" is great but think about that...
- Thank child for talking with you
- End on something neutral (or as neutral as possible)

National Criminal Justice Training Center

## Final Thoughts

- Know that you cannot possibly learn everything in one interview
- Make solid choices based on the purpose of the interview
- Engagement and relationship are key...this means that your ART is almost more important than your science
- These interviews are only one part of a much bigger case with corroboration...

National Criminal Justice Training Center



National Criminal Justice Training Center



---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

National Criminal Justice Training Center