Overview of Child Forensic Interview Training

Video Part 3

>> Colleen Faragon: Welcome back, we've certainly given you a lot of information today. Let's take the next few minutes to answer some of your questions. So, we're going through a stack of questions that have come in, and the first question is going to go right to Victor. So, Victor, the question is, "I have been trained in the current New York Best Practice Model, how urgent is it for me to be trained in the new model?

>> Victor Vieth: I think it's beneficial to be trained in the new model, but it's not urgent that you get it done tomorrow. It's important to remember that all of the major national and state models have far more similarities than dissimilarities. They all meet probable the OJJDP best practice standard, so what you're doing is competent, you can continue to do that. And then when you're able individually, or preferably with your team go through the Child First model, and either way you'll be able to defend it in court.

>> Wendy Calabrese-Sampone Okay, I'm going to follow-up, because I know another question came in. You said preferably with your team, so we had another question that came in that said, "Do staff need to attend as a team, so Child Welfare, Law Enforcement, as they did before with best practices" can you expand on that?

>> Victor Vieth: Yeah, I mean, Child First is really premised on training a team. So, you do as Rita mentioned, mock forensic interviews, and then you staff it -- staff that as a team. So, what do we see here in terms of Child Protection issues? What are Criminal Justice issues here? What are things that may come up in a court of law if this case goes to trial? How are we all going to follow-up together to now collect the corroborating evidence that's been revealed in this forensic interview? So, if you don't come as a team, the experiential learning process is diminished. Now for some reason you can't come as a team, that's okay, we'll try to connect you with an existing team that is in the training. But it's more beneficial if you're able to come as a team.

>> Colleen Faragon: Sure.

>> Rita Farrell: And there's more than just the forensic interviewing process that they're learning, which is what Victor is talking about. And, so, the week-long course really includes other legal lectures that are going to be for New York, and law enforcement lectures, child development, case workers. So, it really is for everyone even if you're not ever going to do a forensic interview, but you're going to observe them or you're going to need to know what your jurisdiction's doing, it's beneficial for all frontline professionals and disciplines. Colleen Faragon: Now Wendy, how will people be notified that this training is available?
Wendy Calabrese-Sampone: Once the training schedule is secured, we'll be entering the training into HSLC. We'll also -- so, they'll -- anybody in HSLC will get the announcements for those, but anybody not in HLSC we'll be also sending emails out to all the CACs across the state. So, everybody should get that information that we have the training scheduled and where it's being scheduled.

Colleen Faragon: Okay. Great, all right, we have more questions coming in. The next question is, "How does the Child First model compare and contrast to the current New York Best Practices model?"

Rita Farrell: Again, as Victor said, there's more similarities than differences. I think the one piece that we want to focus on is the regular updates to meet the best practice in the field. New research is within the Child First training week, and course and protocol it's the best of the best in the sense of what's newest and recommended for the field of Forensic Interviewing in our work.

Victor Vieth: Yeah, and I would just add to that, I mean, one of the nice features of New York being part of the Child First coalition now is, you're not alone. So, your frontline forensic interviewer, or law enforcement officer, or prosecutor, and your seeing something you haven't quite seen before, you're not sure how to handle that, you're able to call or email us. And Rita or Stephanie or one of our forensic interviewers, or if it's a legal issue, me or another one of our prosecutors, we'll get back to you very quickly and we'll kind of walk you through. Or if you have a defense expert is called to attack what you did or didn't do in an interview, you can call us and we'll give you some pointers, we'll give you some sample briefs. We'll help you defend that model in a court of law.

Rita Farrell: In addition, with Forensic Interviewing, it's really all about the techniques that you chose to do, and being able to have purpose and legally defending what you do. And so, one particular protocol or process may include a technique that the other may not have in it. And that's okay, that doesn't make one right and one wrong. What Child First does do in the training week is train on many different topics that -- and techniques that interviewers may or may not use. A couple of examples would be interview instructions, we teach what our field and best practice says about interview instructions. Truth/Lie discussions, all of those kinds of diagrams and dolls, all of those things are techniques that we have to have purpose we can legally defend. And we teach the right way to utilize and do those techniques within the protocol and process.

Speaker: And you know, Victor and Rita you just really mapped out the need for this five day course, because you're certainly, you're covering a lot of information. But one of the questions that did come in is, "Why is this course a five day rather than a three day?" So, I just want to take that question and just have you expand on that.

Victor Vieth: Sure.

Rita Farrell: Sure, you want me to -- I'll start with the agenda, and then Victor can add the -- what's great about the five day is that, it's not just lecture. There's -- we're doing, right? You're watching, listening, and doing, so you're watching interviews, you're discussing it. At the end of the week you're doing a mock interview with the Child First process with one of our actors. And you're facilitating that
group discussion as Victor said, in that -- in those two days we have a final exam. So, we go a little bit further with the hands-on learning as well, in addition to the interviews, so --

>> Victor Vieth: Yeah, and I would add to that two things. One is a practical, if you're going to be a forensic interviewer in a CAC, you have to go through an approved course, and there has to be a least 40 hours of content in that. So, the course has to be five days if you're going to meet that national standard. So, that's a practical matter, but frankly even if there wasn't that national standard, I think our course would be five days. The most important part of a child abuse investigation is the forensic interview in sexual abuse cases in particular that ultimately determines whether or not we're going to able -- be able to protect a child. So, Child First is a very intense course, we don't apologize for that. There's some pre-course homework you have to do, there's homework every night, students will read a lot of the pertinent research. There are professionals in the country who think that frontline professionals really don't need to read any of the research, it should be, you know, experts who synthesize what's important. We disagree with that philosophy, we very much believe in frontline professionals. We believe that they're capable of reading and understanding, and applying at a higher level than anyone else. And so, we put a great deal of trust in them. And then, the huge emphasis on experiential exercises. So, you know, 2/5 of the course is getting in the box and actually practicing those interviews and being critiqued. And you couldn't do that in a three-day course.

>> Colleen Faragon: Okay. All right, thank you. Vicky, during your piece you touched on the requirement or the lack -- it's not required. And here's the question, "Is OCFS requiring caseworkers to be trained, if they've attended the best practices, do they need to learn these new modules?"

>> Vicky Hiffa: No, we're not requiring, but as Victor indicated that certainly given that Child First is using current research and what best practices from the field, it would be strongly encouraged that at some point in the future if they could attend the training as a team. That would be ideal, but certainly if they've been trained in Forensic Interviewing and best practice, then you know, it's not urgent right away, but we would encourage some point in the future they could do that.

>> Colleen Faragon: All right, thank you. So, another question that we have, "Will this training be able to incorporate trial -- child trafficking issues within the training to manage teens and older children, or is this primarily geared towards young children?"

>> Rita Farrell: We will be handling all of those topics in the question in our special topic in advanced trainings that we'll be doing this year. So, that would be available in addition to the five week day training course. And those are one day trainings, special topic advanced trainings.

>> Colleen Faragon: Nice.

>> Victor Vieth: Yeah, and this might be a good time to reemphasize the importance of the Polyvictimization screening, which is one of the unique features of the model. So, you know, every single case irrespective of the presenting problem, there's a screen for multiple forms of maltreatment.
Colleen Faragon: Okay, and just this person with the question about -- for teens, "Will it be open to all partners, law enforcement, CAC, and casework staff as well, these one day --?

Victor Vieth: Mm-hmm.

Colleen Faragon: Okay.

Rita Farrell: Yes.

Colleen Faragon: Great. Thank you. Okay. Let me just make sure we have answered all of our questions here, and it looks like we have. You've answered all of our questions. Well, it is time to wrap up today's training, I'd like to thank Vicky, Wendy, Rita, and Victor for being here today, and for sharing information about this new training. Their contact information has been included in your handouts. And we'll end today by asking you to complete your Participant Reaction questionnaire before you leave, and thank you again for your participation, and for all the hard work that you do on behalf of the children and families of New York State. Have a great day.

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