



CornerHouse Position Statement on Specific Media in the Forensic Interview: The Forensic Use of Paper, Anatomical Diagrams, and Anatomical Dolls

CornerHouse supports the intentional and judicious use of specific media as interview tools during forensic interviews utilizing The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™. The use of these interview tools in the CornerHouse Protocol™ provides opportunities for fact gathering, allows for visual cues, promotes clarity in communication, and provides an alternative to strictly verbal communication when appropriate. In general practice, the types of media incorporated into the CornerHouse forensic interview are limited to paper, anatomical diagrams, and anatomical dolls. Their usefulness is dependent upon the abilities of those employing them – namely, forensic interviewers who are trained in their use, during forensic interviews with individuals (children, adolescents, or vulnerable adults) who are developmentally capable of utilizing the tool. Responsible use of these interview tools requires understanding by both the interviewer and the individual as to how and why a tool is to be used. Introduction of these tools should include verbal clarification of their purpose and appropriate instruction regarding their use.

The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ is flexible and has been updated over time, in response to ongoing research and collection of data in the field. CornerHouse's current position on the incorporation of tools in the forensic interview is based upon the application of available research [resource list available upon request] and the knowledge developed through professional practice within the field. Additionally, CornerHouse's position is consistent with professional guidelines and is inclusive of consideration and consultation with multidisciplinary team partners.

Paper

Paper, used for drawing or writing, is incorporated into The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ in a variety of ways. Easel-mounted chart paper, used with black markers, provides for shared note-taking and allows use by both the interviewer and the individual. Options for use are included in the Methods identified in The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™, and may include opportunities for drawing people, places, objects, or events the individual is describing, as well as writing if the individual prefers. While drawings may provide useful information, individuals should be invited to verbally describe what they are drawing, as interpretation of an individual's drawing by others is not supported practice within The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™.

Anatomical Diagrams

The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ provides for the use of a specific set of anatomical diagrams. The anatomical diagrams used are detailed male and female anatomical diagrams that show front and back views of the body and are consistent in appearance with the age, ethnicity, and physical development of the individual being interviewed. CornerHouse does not recommend the use of other types of diagrams, which may depict figures that are clothed or without genitals. It is our position that these types of diagrams may negatively impact communication and are not as legally defensible, as they may contribute to the individual's experiencing shame or confusion within the interview and to the interviewer's misunderstanding or making incorrect assumptions. Options for specific use of the approved anatomical diagrams are included in the Methods identified in The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™, and functions may include using anatomical diagrams to establish a shared language; to serve as a reference; to offer an alternative or additional means of communication; or to provide for specificity or clarification. Anatomical diagrams can be a helpful tool for communication within the forensic interview process; however, use of anatomical diagrams should not replace nor undermine developmentally appropriate questioning that promotes narrative responses. When used appropriately,

anatomical diagrams can enhance verbal communication between an individual and the interviewer and serve as a tool for clarification and reference.

Anatomical Dolls

CornerHouse supports the use of anatomical dolls during the forensic interview as a tool that can be utilized effectively to enhance an individual's ability to communicate their experience. However, CornerHouse recommends that use of the anatomical dolls occur within specific parameters and be limited to specific conditions; among these are consideration of the individual's developmental ability to use anatomical dolls, as well as how and why anatomical dolls are introduced. CornerHouse uses commercially produced male and female anatomical dolls with body parts similar to people, including oral, anal, and genital openings; with adjustable, removable clothing; and of a size that can easily be maneuvered. Anatomical dolls are available in a range of ages and skin tones, to best represent the individual, the alleged perpetrator, or other pertinent people. CornerHouse limits the introduction and use of anatomical dolls to occur only after a verbal disclosure has been made within the forensic interview. CornerHouse practice identifies that the use of anatomical dolls be as a demonstration aid, for the purpose of showing what has happened. Along with inviting the individual to demonstrate through use of the dolls, it is essential that the individual be encouraged to verbally describe what they are demonstrating, as interpretation of what the individual is demonstrating is not supported practice within The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™. As with other interview tools, anatomical dolls should be utilized in a manner consistent with overall best practices within forensic interviewing. Before, during, and after use of anatomical dolls, individuals should be given opportunity to provide narrative regarding their experience. Anatomical dolls can be a beneficial tool, providing another means for the individual to communicate their experience.

Conclusion

The use of these specific interview tools is integrated within The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™, displayed in CornerHouse practice when conducting forensic interviews, and presented in the training provided by CornerHouse. They are offered as valid options for communication. However, it is not CornerHouse's position that use of paper, anatomical diagrams, or anatomical dolls is required, appropriate, or necessary within every forensic interview. Further, as with any technique, these interview tools should not be relied upon as the sole means of obtaining information from an individual. It is also CornerHouse's position that verbal communication, exclusively, may not be most effective for every individual. Factors such as an individual's culture, development, or their response to trauma may all influence an individual's communication. The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™ is built on The CornerHouse Guiding Principles of being Semi-structured, Person-Centered and Forensically Sound. These Principles direct us in conducting forensic interviews that are mindful of best practices and which provide the best possible opportunity for the unique individual to communicate their experiences in their own way. It is the position of CornerHouse that when used with intentionality and in alignment with The CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol™, such interview tools can be a valuable component of the forensic interview process.