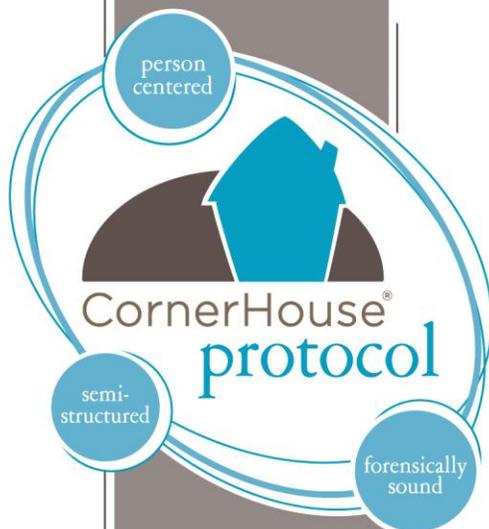


## Reflections on Emerging Issues



### Tell Me Everything

CornerHouse has always integrated research findings into our interviewing practices. In fact, the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol is unique in that it is based on best practices derived from both rigorous research and interviewer experiences. Recent research has shown that more accurate statements come from spontaneous, free flowing narrative. Research has also shown that when people are encouraged to practice providing this narrative in the “rapport” stage, they provide more details later in the interview process.

A forensic interview is a unique interaction, unlike any other conversation between an adult and a child. Unlike a teacher, parent or other authority figure, a forensic interviewer does not know the answers to the questions being asked. The child is the expert in the interview room. Because a child may arrive for a forensic interview with some anxiety, it helps to provide an opportunity to practice a forensic conversation about a non-forensic topic during the “rapport” stage of the interview. Ideally, the interviewer will ask open-ended questions about a neutral topic that the child has mentioned, eliciting details from both script memory (things that happen all the time, such as school) and episodic memory (unique events such as yesterday’s basketball game) (Cordisco-Steele, 2010). When more direct prompts are necessary for clarification, the interviewer will return to open-ended questions as soon as possible.

Practicing this kind of conversation early in the interview helps lay the groundwork for more successful inquiry about the substantive topic of conversation. Sternberg et al. (1997) found that building rapport by using open-ended questions about both the child’s everyday life and a recent event helped interviewers later draw out more abuse-relevant information. Interviewers are able to use the same types of questions in both the “rapport” and “abuse scenario” stages of the interview, thereby maximizing the child’s comfort and competence.

Older children and adolescents are developmentally able to provide more extended narrative in response to open-ended questions. However, even very young children can provide significant details about their experiences when questioned in an open-ended and developmentally-appropriate manner (Lamb et al., 2003).

CornerHouse has begun to integrate “narrative practice” into every interview as we build rapport, as a strategy to help clients provide the most comprehensive and spontaneous information possible. Wendy Anderson, a doctoral student in social work, is currently conducting research on our implementation of narrative practice at CornerHouse. We are excited to learn about the impact of narrative practice on disclosures among CornerHouse clients, thereby advancing the field and contributing to the development of best practices.

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