

# **Process of Disclosure and Expert Witness Testimony**

July 24, 2025  
1:00–2:15 pm CST



# Housekeeping

- If you'd like a copy of the presentation slides today, you can access them in the chat box.
- Please look out for an email later this afternoon that will explain how you can complete the evaluation form & receive your certificate.
- If you have any questions during the presentation, please submit them in the Q & A Box.



# Upcoming Events

Live Webinar





## Child Exploitation: Parental Guidance in the Digital Age

 Thursday, August 21, 2025

 1:00pm CT-2:30pm CT



Brandon Poor

Detective  
Grand Prairie, PD







## REAL EVIDENCE PODCAST







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# Process of Disclosure and Expert Witness *The Forensic Interviewer*

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**Kids Hub**  
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER



# Understanding Disclosure

The **act** of making something known or accessible, especially information that was previously **hidden, private, confidential, or unknown**.

Disclosure is not always clear or linear and individuals may repeat stages of disclosure.



# Types of Disclosure

## ACCIDENTAL

This is when a child reveals abuse or harm unintentionally. It might come out in a drawing, in play, through behavior, or in an offhand comment. The child isn't necessarily trying to tell—they may not even realize the significance of what they're sharing. These moments require us to be attentive, because the child may not follow up with more details unless we respond with care and curiosity.

## PURPOSEFUL

This is when a child makes a conscious choice to tell someone. It might be direct or indirect, partial or full, but the intent is there. These disclosures are often emotionally difficult for the child—they may worry about being believed or what will happen next. Our response in this moment has lasting impact.





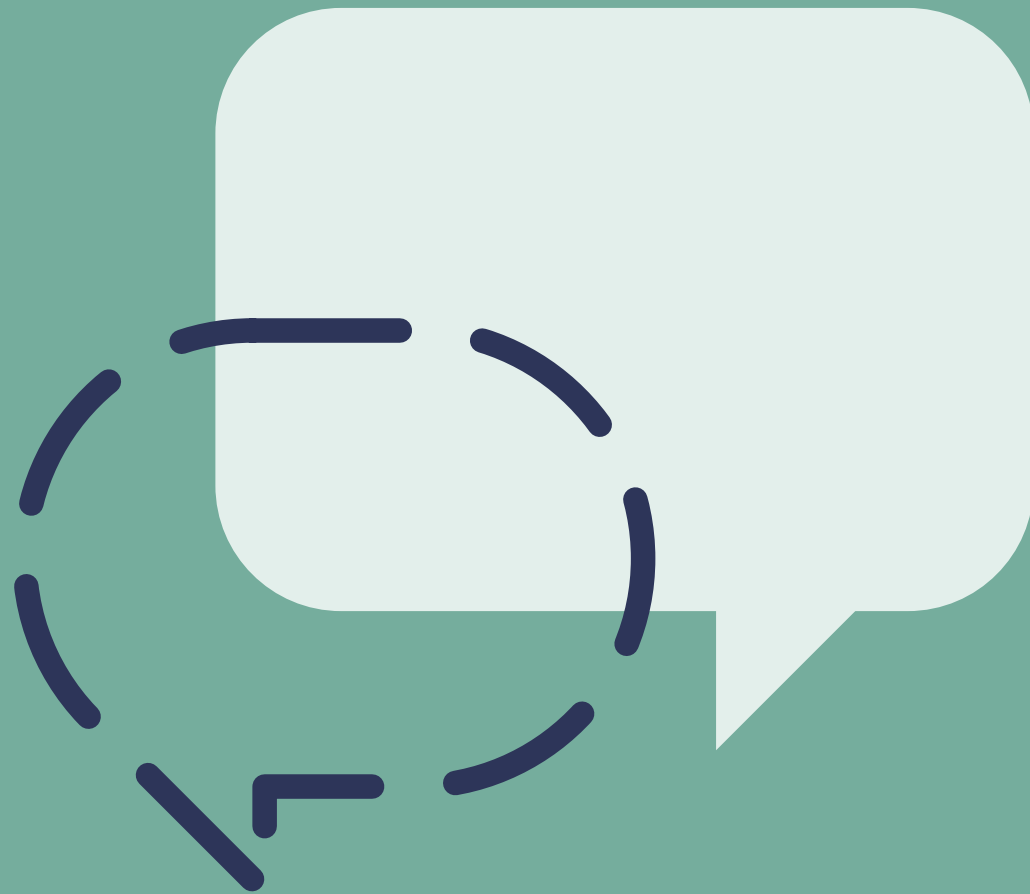
# Stages of Disclosure

- **Denial** – May not say anything, or may deny even when asked directly
- **Active** – Share more openly in detail, but may not share everything
- **Tentative** – May drop hints, test waters, or tell pieces of an experience to gauge reactions
- **Recant** – May take back what they've said, often due to fear, guilt, pressure, etc. This does not mean disclosure wasn't truthful
- **Reaffirm** – May return to disclosure, confirming or clarifying previously shared information





# What Does It Sound Like?



## DENIAL

"Nothing happened."

## TENTATIVE

"I forgot", "That was a long time ago", "He tried, but I bit him"

## ACTIVE

"It happened in my room... they touched me..."

## RECAANT

"I lied because I was mad"

## REAFFIRM

"I said it didn't happen because...(I was scared, embarrassed, coached, etc)"

# Influences for Consideration

- Relationship to alleged offender
- Developmental factors and family beliefs (child may not recognize abuse as inappropriate or not okay behavior)
- Level of support from caregiver(s), friends, community
- Reaction to disclosure
- Continued access to alleged offender (proximity vs emotional)
- Fear of what's next (consequences both intended and unintentional)

# Now What?

- Know your protocol (it's your fall back)
- Listening for those common process of disclosure phrases
- Gather sensory details (see, hear, smell, taste, feel)
- Utilize interview tools (diagrams, dolls)
- Episodic vs Script memory

**Take a step back to remember that reluctance is NOT rebellion, defiance,  
or an indicator that abuse did not occur**

Think about a time you were reluctant to do something or share something  
(what were your thoughts, feelings, behaviors)



# From the Room to the Stand

- What information do you have on your CV, and does it speak to your credibility?
  - The basics (education, employment, etc.)
  - Number of interviews (interviewer preference)
  - Trainings (attended vs conducted)
  - Peer Support Facilitation
  - Previous court appearances
  - Special appointments
- Regular Updates

# Know Your Research

- Protocol
- Disclosure
- Grooming
- Compliant victims
- Process of Disclosure (specifically Recantation)
- Using Interviewer tools
- Suggestibility
- Inconsistencies vs Contradictions
- Others?

Have it all in one place and easily accessible

# Recommended Articles

- **APSAC Advisor (Sept. 2020)** – Forensic Interviewing Critical Updates for Professionals
  - APSAC chart for protocol comparisons
- **Sorenson and Snow (1991)** – How Children Tell: The Process of Disclosure in Child Sexual Abuse
- **OJJDP's White Paper (2015)** – Child Forensic Interviewing: Best Practices
- **Zero Abuse Project (Everson and Boat)** The Utility of Anatomical Dolls and Drawings in Child Forensic Interviews





# Personal Prep

- Consider your learning styles (visual, auditory, hands on, etc) and work with it! (make flash cards, quiz, role play)
- Know the Basics
  - What is a forensic interview
  - What is a forensic interviewer
  - Protocol and why you use that one
  - Phases of your protocol
  - Familiar with other protocols (NICHHD, NCAC, ChildFirst, etc)
  - What are Sensory (5 Senses) vs Periphery details (Wh's)
  - Episodic vs Script
  - Grooming
  - Others?

# Personal Prep

- Re-watch your interview
- Transcribe and Mark important portions of the interview
- Note the imperfections for future discussion with District Attorney

**REMEMBER THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A  
PERFECT INTERVIEW!**

# Team Preparation

- Meet with your district attorney in advance
- Have a list of standard questions
- Discuss common defense questions



# Common Defense Questions

- Truth vs Lie (know the laws in your state)
- Advocates work at advocacy centers (neutrality)
- Children lie – YES, of course
- Forensic interviews and the science of it
- Testifying for the Defense
- Belief that all children getting an interview have experienced abuse
  - News Clip Story



# Remaining Professional

- Educator
- Neutrality (let your DA do the fighting)
- Answer with Yes/No, Of Course/Of Course Not
- Know your Limitations (Exceptions in MS and MI, though I'd still push for caution)
- Considerations for attire



# Thank you!

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