



Interviewing Children in the Context of Domestic Violence

Elizabeth Critz Schockmel

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**Points to Consider When Interviewing
Children Exposed to Domestic Violence:
A Quick Summary**

Elizabeth Critz Schockmel, Psy.D.
Capital Psychological Associates
Albany, New York

notes to accompany a lecture

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Quick Summary —

Points to consider when interviewing children exposed to domestic violence

- I. Data from the child client is obtained via two paths
 - a. CONTENT of the interview
 - b. STYLE of the interviewee (how the child speaks, behaves, relates)

- II. Quality of the data is dependent upon a number of factors
 - a. how child/adult perceives the interviewer
 - b. atmosphere of the interview
 - c. interviewing style of the clinician
 - d. success of the interviewer gearing the meeting to the appropriate developmental level of the child

- III. Goals of the attorney/child client interview
 - a. expansion of knowledge regarding the child's situation
 - b. obtain information relevant to the child's experiences and behavior (home, school, community)
 - c. quick screen for developmental issues (physical, intellectual, emotional, social)
 - d. assessment of problems, stressors, coping styles of the child
 - e. education for child re: legal process
 - f. lessen any sense of burden felt by the child

- IV. Factors to consider when conducting a child interview
 - a. child's (chronological) age
 - b. developmental level of the child
 - c. gender
 - d. role and place in the family system
 - e. personality and temperament of the child
 - f. extent, frequency and nature of violence
 - g. health concerns
 - h. educational history
 - i. psychiatric history (if relevant)

Listen for data that is inconsistent with what you know or understand to be true

- V. The importance of rapport: speak and act in ways that put the child at ease
 - a. convey respect and interest from the outset
 - b. endeavor to make the child comfortable
 - c. offer an age appropriate introduction
 - d. listen attentively; demonstrate interest
 - e. gear the interview to the developmental stage of the child
 - f. no critical/judgmental remarks

- VI. Variables that may contribute to problems establishing rapport
 - a. child afraid of interview and/or of separating from parent
 - b. child afraid of being asked to "tell" on a parent
 - c. fear on the child's part of disclosing what he or she knows
 - d. fear of being ignored
 - e. presence of anxiety/worry
 - f. the child is guarded as a function of personality
 - g. anger on the part of the child

- VI. Maintain awareness of how children can experience domestic violence
 - a. direct observation
 - b. indirect exposure (hearing events from another room)
 - c. combination of direct and indirect exposure
 - d. observation of the outcomes of domestic violence