

Addressing Delayed Disclosure

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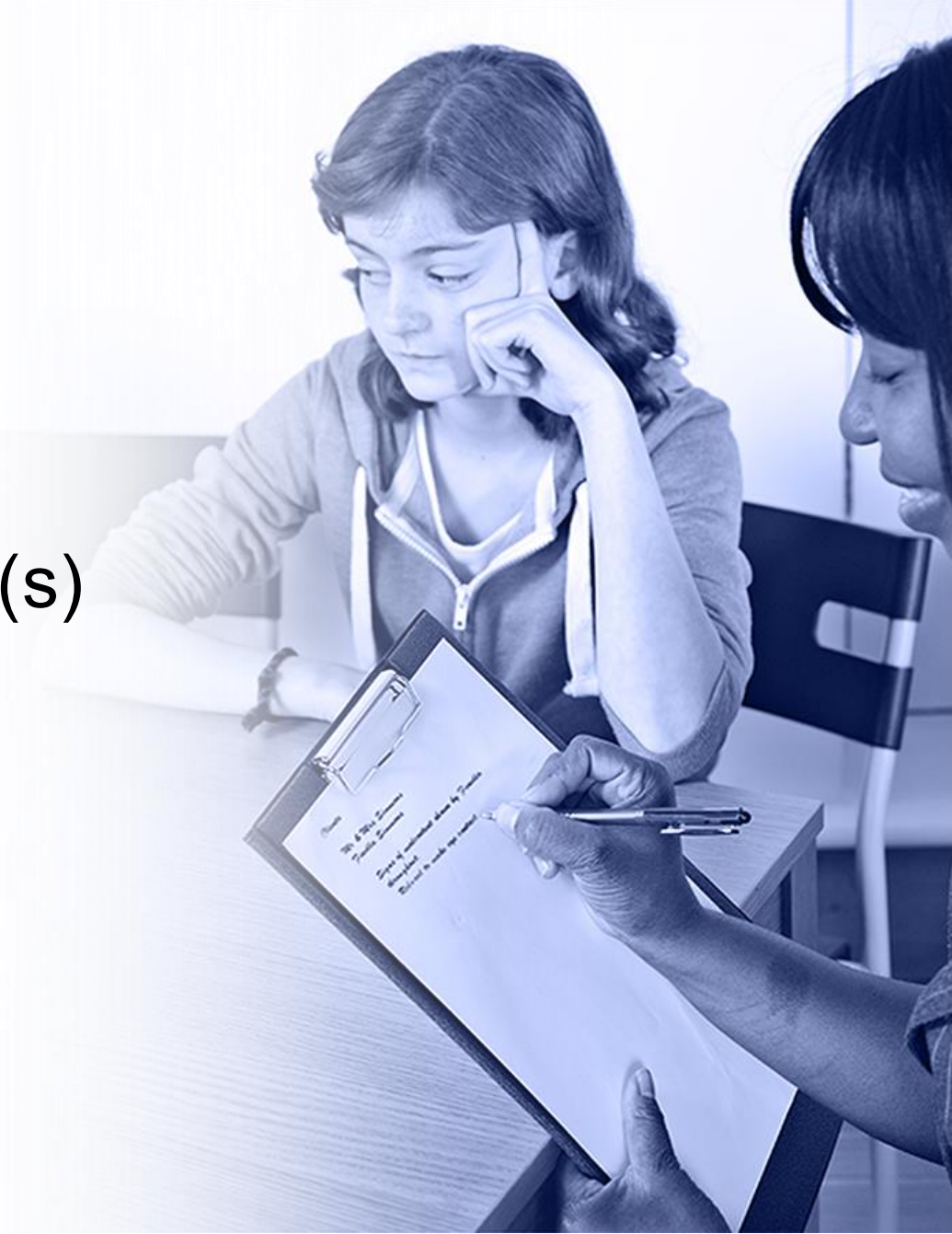
Learning Objectives

- 1 Improve understanding of the disclosure process and reasons youth wait to tell
- 2 Identify challenges and barriers related to delayed disclosure investigations
- 3 Gain techniques and strategies for uncovering reasons for delays in the context of a forensic interview

Disclosure

is a process...

- Cost benefit analysis
- Decide to tell
- Find a way to articulate experience(s)
- Identify person(s) to tell
- Test the waters
- Disclose
- Deal with fall-out of disclosure



Types of Disclosure

Accidental v. Purposeful

Accidental Disclosures

Often seen in younger children

May happen under normal everyday occurrences (bath time, play time, etc.)

Often occurs prior to full cost/benefit analysis

Blurt-out or slip of statement

May lead to recantation

Purposeful Disclosure

Pressure cooker

Change of circumstances

(Mostly) full cost/benefit analysis

Decision to hold the secret greater risk than disclosure

Disclosure Requires

A witness

There is almost always a delay in disclosure...

regardless if accidental or purposeful

Relationship to Perpetrator

Known person

Grooming behaviors

Push-pull dynamic

Manipulation of power and trust

11 yo girl (AO: 17 yo bio brother), 7 yr delay

I: Tell me about telling someone...

AV: I couldn't tell because my brother is my best friend. He doesn't always do this stuff, and I don't want him to go to jail.

Filial Dependency

Greater the dependency---greater the tendency to deny

16 yo forced disclosure (AO: bio dad), 4 yr delay

I: Did your mom know what was happening?

AV: No

I: Tell me more about that...

AV: I never told my mom. My mom does not have an education, and she also doesn't speak English very well. She can understand it, but she can't speak it. She wouldn't be able to get a job and even if she could, it wouldn't be a good enough job that could pay for our whole life. I just couldn't put that on her.

Age and Duration of Abuse

8.5 yo (AO: maternal uncle), 3 year delay

I: What has made it ok to talk about this now?

AV: I didn't know it was bad. It felt weird, but he always smiled and laughed. I was confused.

Fear of Consequences

- Kellogg, N.D., Koek, W., & Nienow, S.N. (2020)
 - Reviewed 601 medical charts of adolescent/preadolescent females who had experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault and who agreed to answer question specific to their disclosure experience
 - Fear of consequences to self most common reason for delay
 - Concerns of being harmed, getting into trouble and not being believed were chief among these fears

16 yo (AO: family friend), 10 year delay

I: I heard you say that you wish you would have just told. What made you feel like you couldn't tell someone?

AV: I didn't know how. He was the person everyone wanted to be around. He was everyone's best friend, and I didn't think anyone would believe me. When your whole world loves the person who is doing the worst thing they could, there is just no one to tell.

Additional Reasons for Delayed Disclosure

Threats

Exposure

Initial disclosure failed to mobilize
intervention/response

Delayed disclosures are to be expected

...and cause challenges to reaching optimal outcomes

Challenges Caused by Delayed Disclosure



The diagram consists of three light blue rounded rectangular boxes arranged horizontally. Each box is partially overlapped by a solid blue rounded rectangular shape on its top-left side. The boxes contain the text 'Evidence', 'Potential witnesses', and 'Recollection' respectively.

Evidence

Potential
witnesses

Recollection

Challenges and the many challenging perceptions...

- Non-offending caregivers
- Extended family
- Friends/Community
- Potential jurors



Statute of Limitations

...yet another challenge of the delayed disclosure

Strategies to Address Delayed Disclosure...

“Results suggest noncontingent interviewer support bolsters children’s accuracy. Children are more resistant and less acquiescent to suggestive questions when interviewers are supportive as compared to non-supportive or neutral.”

Saywitz, K.J., Wells, C. R., Larsen, R.P. & Hobbs, S.D. (2019). Effects of Interviewer support on Children’s Memory and Suggestibility: Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses of Experimental Research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 20(1) 22-39.

Addressing the Delayed Disclosure

Offer space for victim to explain their disclosure process

Use of narrative-inviting prompt/open-ended questions

“Tell me about how you decided to tell someone...”

“What has made it ok to talk about this now?”

Capture context of disclosures in addition to what was said

...include any reactions of all parties

Listen for and Seek Corroboration



Evidence



Nonoffending caregiver/potential
witness statements/observations

Pooling the Information

- Nonoffending caregivers
 - Timelines
 - Access
 - Behaviors/behavior changes
 - Medical histories
 - Observations
 - Conversations
 - Potential statements by alleged offenders

Additional information potentially obtained

- Mental health considerations (relationship dynamics between supportive/non-supportive caregivers)
- **Context that provides credibility to the youth sitting across from us**

~~Delayed~~ Disclosure

Support the Disclosure Process...

Support the child

“

It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement and remembering.

”

Judith Herman, M.D.

Herman, J. (1997). Trauma & Recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror. Basic Books: New York, NY.



Questions & Comments

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Thank You

