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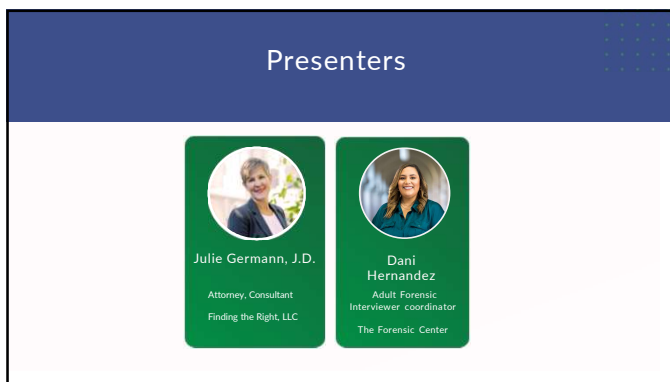
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## THE FORENSIC CENTER



24/7 VICTIM SERVICE CENTER THAT OFFERS MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMS, ADVOCACY, ADULT FORENSIC INTERVIEWS AND COUNSELING SERVICES.



SERVICES COVER 23 COUNTIES WITHIN TEXAS IN THE HOUSTON RIO GRANDE VALLEY AND NORTH TEXAS REGIONS.



IN 2023, THE TXFNE FNE TEAM CONDUCTED OVER 2300 MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMS, OVER 600 ADULT FORENSIC INTERVIEWS & 1000'S OF HOURS OF CLIENT ADVOCACY.

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## LOCATIONS & PARTNERS

### 9 CLINIC LOCATIONS

TXFNE clinics as well as clinic locations in various locations:

- 7: Houston
- 1: Rio Grande Valley
- 1: North Texas

### 100+ HOSPITAL PARTNERS

Partnered with various emergency rooms both hospital based and freestanding:

- 75+ Houston
- 15: Rio Grande Valley
- 22: North Texas

### 4 CHILDREN ASSESSMENT CENTERS

Medical providers for the CACs in that service several counties:

- Children's Safe Harbor: Montgomery, Walker & San Jacinto
- Crisis Center: Wharton & Matagorda
- Children's Safe Alliance: Brazoria
- Child Advocates of Fort Bend: Fort Bend, Austin & Walker

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## WHAT IS TRAUMA?



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## The 3 E's in Trauma

Event

Event or circumstance cause trauma.

Experience

Someone's experience of the event determines whether it is traumatic.

Effect

Effects of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional, or spiritual consequences.

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## Types of Trauma



Acute



Complex



Chronic

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## How Trauma Impacts the Brain

- Fight, Flight, Freeze
- Survivor vs. rational brain
- Memory storage emotional & sensory
- The brain does the picking
- Trauma in action



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### How Trauma Impact Memories

- Sensory fragments
- Non-traumatic vs. traumatic memories
- Memory blocks



vs.



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### How Does this Impact the Criminal Justice System?

Participant:

- "Story doesn't make sense"
- Feel not believed
- Disengagement with the system
- Lack follow up resources

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## THE ADULT FORENSIC INTERVIEW (AFI)®

\*Disclaimer

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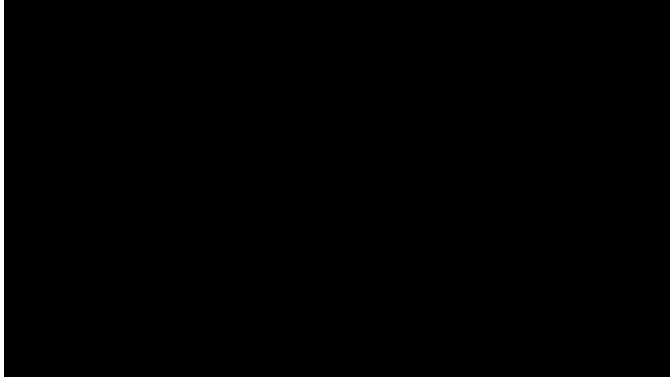
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## AFI© Impact

- **How did we get here?**
- **The work**
  - Program launch in June 2020
  - Launched with two interviewers, currently have 4 with pending plans of expansion
  - Total AFI© from inception through September 2024 = 2688
  - We have conducted over 500 TFIs from inception through September 2024
- **Interesting Facts**
  - Conducted interviews for over 50 agencies, including the FBI, Homeland Security, TABC and DPS
  - Interviews have been conducted in 13 different languages
  - Farthest location of TFI ... AUSTRALIA!

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## Victimizations

- **SEXUAL ASSAULT**
- **ADULTS MOLESTED AS CHILDREN (AMAC)**
- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**
- **SEX TRAFFICKING**
- **LABOR TRAFFICKING**
- **ELDER ABUSE**
- **WITNESSES TO CRIME**

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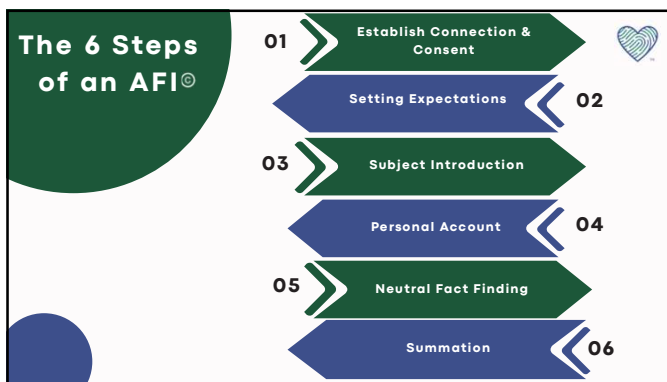
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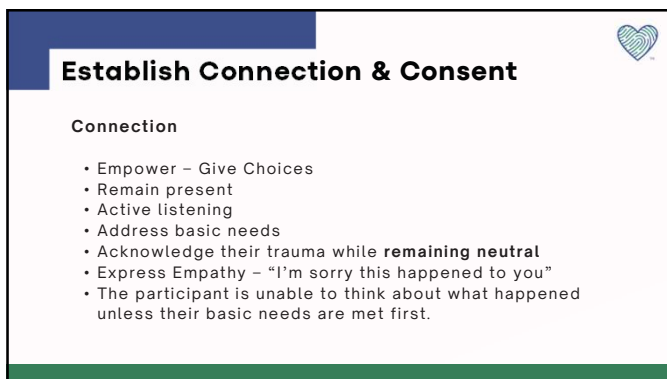
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## AFI Rooms



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## Establish Connection & Consent



### Connection

- Create a space that feels physically and emotionally safe
- Familiarize the victim with the environment
- Manage expectations
- Discuss audio/video recording
- Use layman's term not criminal justice terminology
- Interviews should be conducted in the victim's preferred language and in person, if possible

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## Establish Connection & Consent



### Consent

- The recording begins once the participant enters the interview room (video & audio)
- Explain the Adult Forensic Interview
- Never stand over the participant
- The interviewer **is not** law enforcement
- Read the consent out loud
- Answer questions
- Offer the participant a copy

FORENSIC INTERVIEWING	
Victim Information	
Name (Print)	
Date of Birth	
Address	
City/State/Zip	
Phone Number	
Consent	
Interviewer	
Interview Date	
Interview Time	
Interview Location	
Interviewer Signature	
Participant Signature	
Witness Signature	

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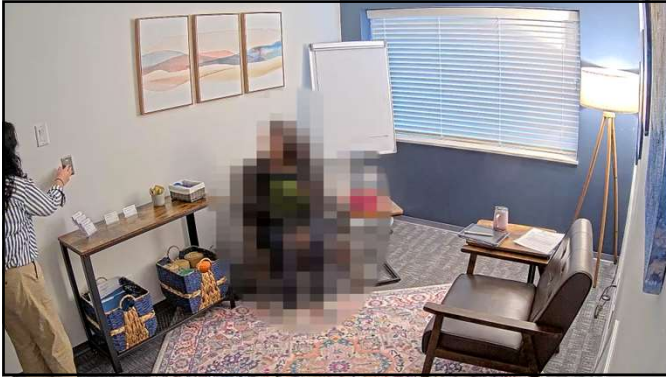
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### Setting Expectations

- Interviewer explains the flow of the interview
- Reduce distractions
- Confidentiality
- Note taking
- Details
- Do not know, please do not guess
- Taking breaks
- Allows time for questions



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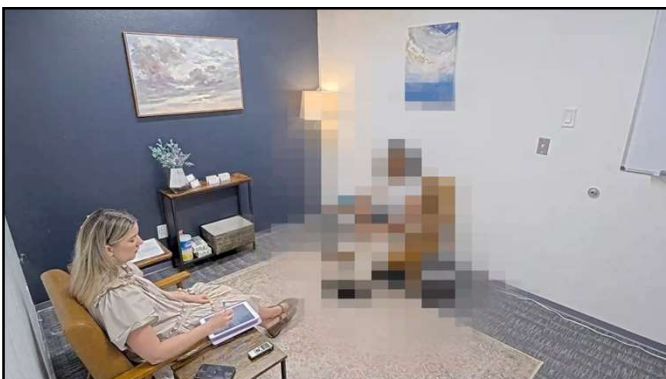
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## SUBJECT INTRODUCTION


A Shift Within the Interview



Interviewer offers the participant a choice to get to know each other



Begin sharing what brought the interviewer and the participant together



Rapport and a non-judgmental space should be established, as the participant decides whether to share sensitive information.

"I am ready to listen, please share what happened which brought us together today ..."

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## Personal Account



- 1 Interviewer Role**  
Participant shares what happened, the interviewer's role is to listen.
- 2 Long Pause**  
Participant may display a long pause prior to sharing.
- 3 Active Listening**  
Actively listen, display positive body language.
- 4 Formulate Questions**  
Prepare for additional questions as the participant talks. Clarify based on what the participant shares
- 5 Wait!**  
Wait for the participant to finish, do not cut them off.
- 6 Remain neutral**  
Remain neutral and unbiased. It is okay to be empathetic and acknowledge the participant's trauma.



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## Neutral Fact Finding



- Start easy**
  - Start with easier questions, these ground the participant and give them confidence and puts them at ease.
- Encourage narrative responses**
  - Allow the participant to talk - take the time - avoid interruptions.
- Move to broad questions**
  - "Where would you like to start?"
  - "Would you tell me about what you remember about your experience?"
- Open-Ended Questions**
  - "Tell me how you were feeling when that happened?"
- Multiple Option**
  - Questions are used to clarify extensive information
- Avoid Leading**
  - "Were you feeling scared when that happened?"
- Focused Recall**
  - Technique used when restating the participant's words & language to clarify information without leading or imparting bias.
- Closed- Ended**
  - Questions are used to clarify specific details.

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## Summation



- Check-In with the Investigative Team**

This occurs outside of the room, offer this time for the participant to use the restroom or get a drink - the recording remains on.
- Continued Discussion**

Discuss additional clarifying questions, corroborative details/facts requested
- Extend Interview Life**

Give the opportunity to extend the life of the interview, if the participant remembers new details.
- Offer Resources**

Offer a connection to medical forensic exam, advocacy, mental health & community resources.
- Close the Interview**

The interview closes with discussion of a neutral topic, ensuring the participant has the interviewer's contact information.

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## Adult Forensic Interviewing & The Criminal Justice System



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### How AFI© Impacts Prosecution

Investigations & Charging  
decisionsTrauma-informed  
Communications

Grand Jury Presentations

Testimony  
Supplementation/Corroboration

Plea Negotiations

Trial Preparations



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### Investigations & Charging Decisions



Complete and thorough account

Sensory Details

Working through the trauma

Law enforcement observation &amp; follow up

Non-judgmental evaluation  
• Elements checklist

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## Grand Jury Presentations

- Testimony from survivor not necessary
  - Avoids another sworn statement
- Informs credibility analysis
- Prompts trauma-informed conversation
- Juries appreciate the unbiased interview



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## Plea Negotiations

- Defense attorney review
- Insight into testimony
- Perspective on survivor "credibility"



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## Trial Preparation

Direct testimony guide

Survivor control & confidence

Demeanor estimation

Forfeiture by wrongdoing

Extraneous/ Other bad acts



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## Testimony Supplementation/Corroboration

- Refreshing Recollection
- Impeachment/Rule of Optional Completeness
- Forensic Interviewer as an expert
  - Trauma responses/survivor reactions
  - "Consistent with..."



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## Trauma Informed Communication

Law Enforcement & Prosecutor Training



Open  
Dialogue



Emotional  
Validation



Non-  
judgmental  
language



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**Executive Summary: Evaluation of the Adult Forensic Interviewing Program at the Forensic Center of Excellence**

Overview: Adult forensic interviewing (AFI) is a process of eliciting accurate and reliable information from victims through a structured interview, with the goal of gathering information as a resource, ethical, and legally defensible manner. AFI is designed to support the criminal justice system and law enforcement while ensuring a victim-centered approach to the investigation of violence. The AFI program was created by the Forensic Center of Excellence (FCE) in 2015, and is now a core component of the Forensic Center of Excellence's mission. The AFI program is a multi-disciplinary effort involving law enforcement, forensic interviewers, and other professionals. The AFI program is designed to provide a structured and consistent approach to the investigation of violence, while ensuring a victim-centered approach to the investigation of violence. The AFI program is designed to provide a structured and consistent approach to the investigation of violence, while ensuring a victim-centered approach to the investigation of violence.

**Method:** This collaborative evaluation was conducted in three phases. Phase one resulted in a review of the AFI program and its components. Phase two resulted in a review of the AFI program's impact on law enforcement and forensic interviewers. Phase three resulted in a review of the AFI program's impact on the criminal justice system. The evaluation was conducted in a collaborative manner, with all stakeholders involved in the process. The evaluation was conducted in a collaborative manner, with all stakeholders involved in the process. The evaluation was conducted in a collaborative manner, with all stakeholders involved in the process.

**Results:** The evaluation found that the AFI program has a positive impact on law enforcement and forensic interviewers. The program has improved the quality of the information gathered, and has increased the confidence of law enforcement and forensic interviewers in the AFI program. The program has also improved the victim's experience, and has increased the victim's confidence in the AFI program. The program has also improved the victim's experience, and has increased the victim's confidence in the AFI program.

**Conclusion:** The AFI program is a valuable tool for law enforcement and forensic interviewers. The program has improved the quality of the information gathered, and has increased the confidence of law enforcement and forensic interviewers in the AFI program. The program has also improved the victim's experience, and has increased the victim's confidence in the AFI program. The program has also improved the victim's experience, and has increased the victim's confidence in the AFI program.

**Recommendations:** The AFI program should be continued and expanded. The program should be evaluated regularly to ensure it is meeting the needs of law enforcement and forensic interviewers. The program should be evaluated regularly to ensure it is meeting the needs of law enforcement and forensic interviewers. The program should be evaluated regularly to ensure it is meeting the needs of law enforcement and forensic interviewers.

**References:** [References to research and literature on AFI and victim-centered approaches to the investigation of violence.]

**Appendix:** [Appendix containing additional information on the AFI program, including a list of interview questions and a sample interview transcript.]

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## Evaluation Findings: LE & Prosecutors

- Law enforcement and prosecutors felt that the AFI improved evidence collection which made stronger cases and improved victim engagement.
- Stakeholders felt the AFI provided more complete and accurate information

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## Evaluation Findings: Participant

- Participants felt that the interviewers were warm, responsive and "put people at ease"
- Reported feeling more comfortable talking with the interviewer than LE
- Nearly half met with an advocate after their interview for resources

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## TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

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## INVESTIGATIVE MISCONCEPTIONS



Victims are generally asked to provide information in a chronological order. "Let's start from the beginning."



Interviewers historically have been focused on the who, what, when, where and why questions



Investigators assume that victims will recall specific details

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## Trauma Informed Interviewing – Take-Aways

- Interview in a space that feels safe for the victim.
- Assess and manage the victim's needs
- Familiarize the victim with the environment
- Utilize your community advocates for victim support during the interview process
- Interviews should be conducted in the victim's preferred language and in person, if possible



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Thank you for attending!

Contact us for questions.



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