



Association of  
Title IX Administrators

# Civil Rights Investigator Level Four

Training and Certification Course



Strategic Risk  
Management Solutions



Any advice or opinion provided during this training, either privately or to the entire group, is never to be construed as legal advice. Always consult with your legal counsel to ensure you are receiving advice that considers existing case law, any applicable state or local laws, and evolving federal guidance.

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# AGENDA

- 1 Title IX & Regulations Overview
- 2 Civil Rights Investigations
- 3 Evolution of Investigation Techniques
- 4 Empathetic & Equitable Investigations
- 5 The Investigation Strategy
- 6 Cognitive Interviewing

# AGENDA

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Rapport

8

Memory

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Trauma Basics

10

Credibility

11

Sex and Gender-Inclusive Investigations

12

Interviewing Children

# CONTENT ADVISORY

The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with sex- and gender-based harassment, discrimination, and violence and associated sensitive topics that can evoke strong emotional responses.

ATIXA faculty members may offer examples that emulate the language and vocabulary Title IX practitioners encounter in their roles including slang, profanity, and other graphic or offensive language.

# TITLE IX

*20 U.S.C. § 1681 & 34 C.F.R. Part 106 (1972)*

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”



# 2020 TITLE IX REGULATIONS

- Issued May 6, 2020 (Publication date May 19, 2020)
- Effective and enforceable August 14, 2020
  - Amend the Code of Federal Regs. and have force and effect of law
  - Some provisions already mandated by due process case law in some jurisdictions
  - Intervening variables (litigation and election) may impact enforcement in the shorter or longer term
  - Lawsuits against regs
- Significant, legalistic, surprisingly prescriptive, due process heavy, and go well beyond what courts have required under 5<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Amendment case law

# NEUTRALITY AND OBJECTIVITY

- Grievance process must treat parties “equitably”
  - Must be designed to restore or preserve access to education programs
  - Must include enhanced due process protections before disciplinary sanctions are imposed
- Prohibits conflict of interest or bias with coordinators, investigators, and decision-makers against parties generally or against an individual party
- All relevant evidence obtained must be **objectively** evaluated
- Mandates training on appropriate investigation, hearing, evidence, credibility, bias, conflict of interest



# ADVISOR OF CHOICE

- Must allow Advisor to be present at all meetings, interviews, hearings
  - May not restrict who may serve as Advisor (though the Advisor has a choice in the matter)
  - May restrict Advisor participation as long as applied equally to all parties

# ADVISOR OF CHOICE

- If a party does not have an Advisor to conduct cross-examination at hearing, the higher education institution must provide one
  - No fee or charge
  - Advisor of recipient's choice
  - May be an attorney
  - Can't be "fired" by party, but can be nullified by non-cooperation

# BURDEN OF PROOF ON SCHOOL TO GATHER EVIDENCE

- The burden of proof and burden of gathering evidence rests with the school, not the parties
  - Recipient, not Respondent, must prove unwelcomeness or non-consent
- “Sufficient to reach a determination”
- Equal opportunity to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses, and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence
- Evidence collected by law enforcement *or any other source*
- Contracted/outsourced investigators do not absolve the school of responsibility for this provision

# INVESTIGATION REPORT

- Regulations mandate creation of an investigation report
  - Report fairly summarizes all relevant evidence
  - What should go into a report? Hit the G.A.S.
    - **Gather** evidence
    - **Assess** credibility and relevance
    - **Synthesize** areas of dispute/agreement and all questions asked

# PARTY ACCESS TO EVIDENCE/REPORT

- Prior to the completion of the investigation report, all evidence related to allegations must be provided to the parties (and their Advisors, if any)
  - Parties must have at minimum of 10 days to review and submit written responses prior to finalizing investigation report
  - Parties must receive finalized report to review and submit written responses 10 days prior to hearing
  - Essential to develop a clear protocol and workflow for these steps

# THE IX COMMANDMENTS

**INVESTIGATION**  
(plus prompt & fair  
per VAWA § 304)



**Thorough**

**Reliable**

**Impartial**

**PROCESS**



**Prompt**

**Effective**

**Equitable**

**REMEDIES**

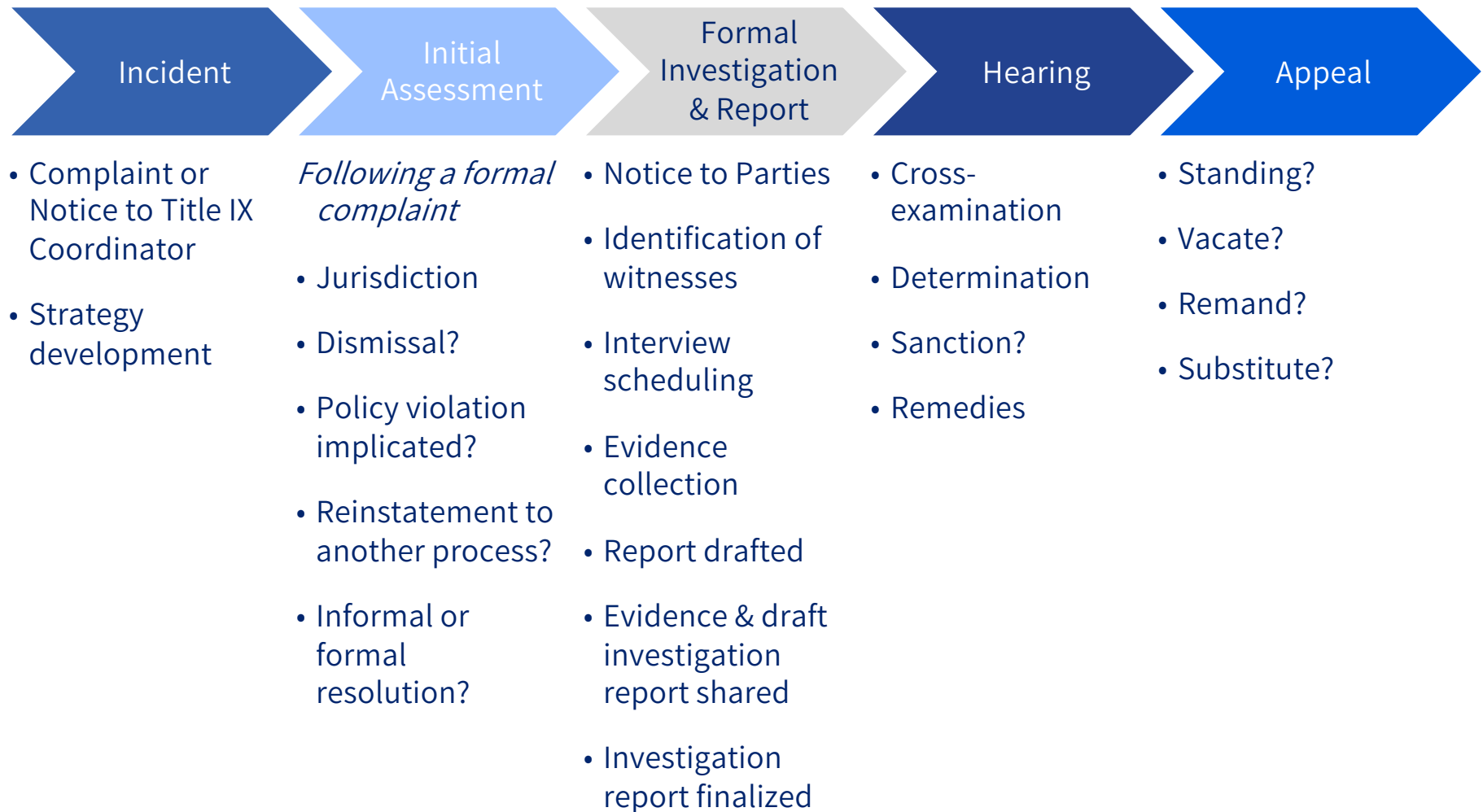


Act reasonably  
to stop  
discrimination

Act reasonably  
to prevent  
recurrence

Act equitably to  
remedy effects

# THE PROCESS



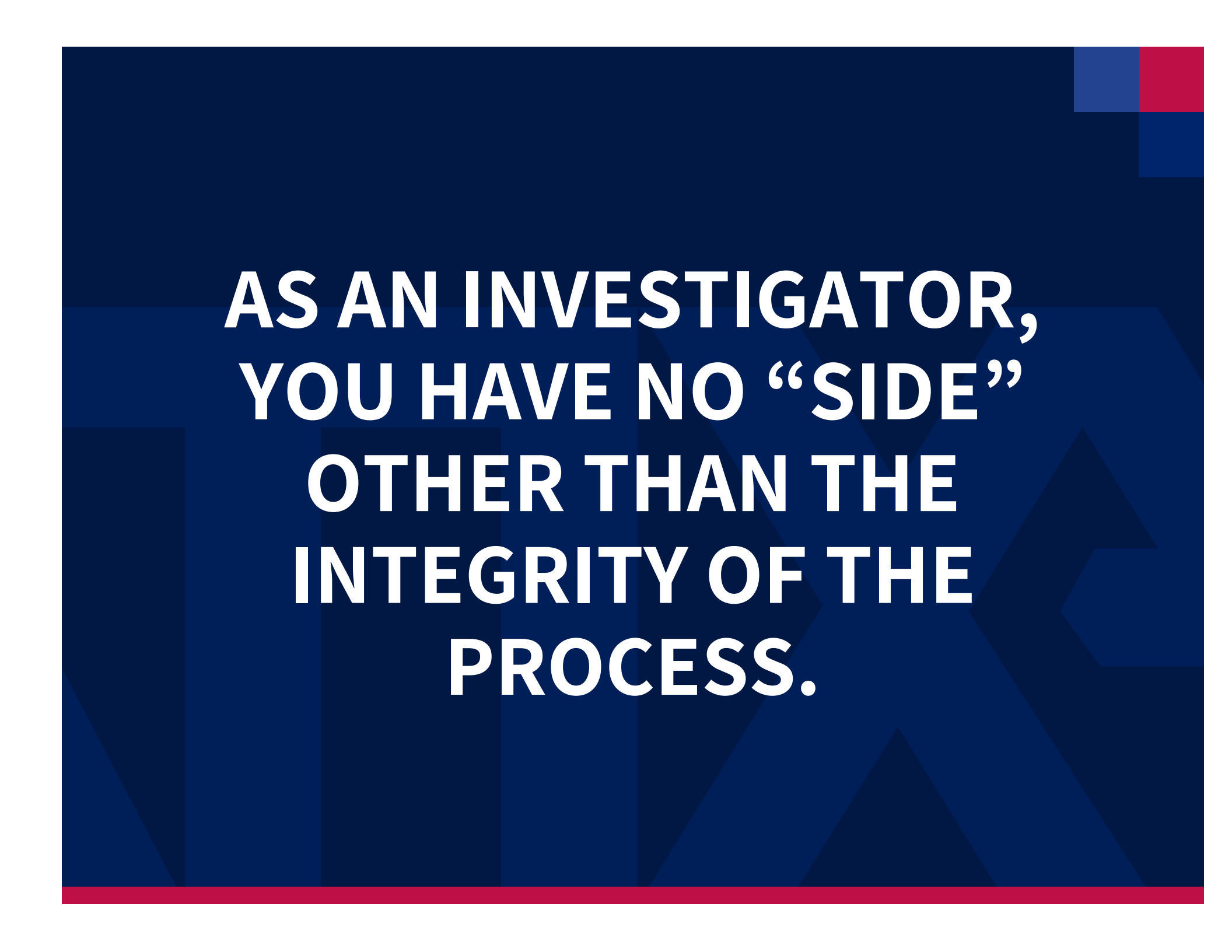
# 10 STEPS OF AN INVESTIGATION

1. Receive Notice/Complaint
2. Initial Assessment and Jurisdiction Determination
3. Establish basis for investigation (Incident, Pattern, and/or Culture/Climate)
4. Notice of Investigation and Allegations to Parties
5. Establish investigation strategy
6. Formal comprehensive investigation
  - Witness interviews
  - Evidence gathering



# 10 STEPS OF AN INVESTIGATION

7. Draft report
8. Meet with Title IX Coordinator (or legal counsel) to review draft report and evidence
9. Provide the draft report and all evidence directly related to the allegations to parties and their Advisors for inspection and review with 10 days for response
10. Complete final investigation report
  - Synthesize and analyze relevant evidence
  - Send final report to parties for review and written response at least 10 days prior to hearing



**AS AN INVESTIGATOR,  
YOU HAVE NO “SIDE”  
OTHER THAN THE  
INTEGRITY OF THE  
PROCESS.**

# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

## **Investigation is the cornerstone of resolution.**

- What happened?
- Who was affected?
- Stop and prevent
- Interim actions and supportive measures
- Scope, pattern, threats
- Documentation and recordkeeping
- “Not deliberately indifferent”

# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

**Investigations serve an institutional purpose, but do not serve the institution.**

- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Equity
- Open and consistent communication
- Full and fair participation
- Published policy prohibitions
- Detailed procedures

# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

**Investigations are as broad as the allegations require.**

- Active identification and accumulation of evidence
- All relevant witnesses
- Evidence from all available sources
- Recommendations from parties
- Expert witnesses
- Prior substantially similar misconduct

# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

## **Investigations turn on reliable information.**

- Party engagement
- Witness participation
- Corroborative evidence
- Thorough review
- Credibility assessment
- Evidentiary analysis
- Determination

# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

**The best information comes from someone who feels safe and believes the process will work as promised.**

- Transparency
  - Investigation's purpose
  - Potential outcomes
- Information sharing
- Consistent communication
- Reciprocity

# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

**Rapport is one of the best tools for gathering reliable information.**

- A relaxed interviewee (not on guard) is more forthcoming, less scripted, more introspective, and thoughtful
- Reduce anxiety
- Eliminate antagonism
- Gain trust



# CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

## **Cognitive interviewing depends on rapport.**

- “Enter someone else’s world and make them feel that you understand them.”
- “Speak in such a way that they enjoy listening. Listen in such a way that they enjoy speaking.”
- “Build trust. Show you understand their needs and deliver on your promises.”
- “If you can develop rapport, you can fill their needs and they will be able to fill yours.”



# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATION TECHNIQUES

- Trial by Ordeal
- Wickersham Commission
- *Brown v. Mississippi* (1936)
- Moran & Scharff
- HIG Post-911 Report

# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## **Trial by Ordeal**

- Guilt or innocence of the accused was determined by subjection to dangerous or painful tests (such as submersion in water) believed to be under divine control
- Floating in water
- Carrying a hot iron
- Combat
- Open to interpretation based on what community knew about the individual

# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## The Third Degree

- Willful infliction of pain and suffering on criminal suspects
- 1931-32 Wickersham Commission – *Lawlessness in Law Enforcement*
- Found widespread use of the third degree
- Led to nationwide police reform of investigation and interrogation tactics

# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## ***Brown v. Mississippi, 297 U.S. 278 (1936)***

- Ellington hanged, let down, hanged again, whipped
- Other defendants “laid over chairs and their backs were cut to pieces with a leather strap with buckles on it”
- All three eventually confessed
- “The rack and torture chamber may not be substituted for the witness stand”
- “Use of the confessions...as the basis for conviction and sentence was a clear denial of due process”

# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## **Sherwood Ford Moran**

- 1943 memo on interrogating Japanese POWs
- Preferred “interviewers” over “interrogators”
- Intimidating or authoritative attitude is counterproductive
- “Deep human sympathy can go with a business-like, systematic, and ruthlessly persistent approach”

# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## **Hans Scharff**

- German Luftwaffe interrogator
- Never used physical means to get information
- Seemed as if he was the prisoner's greatest advocate
- Jokes, homemade food, alcohol, swimming, tea
- POWs often offered information rather than responding to questions
- Confirmation interviewing

# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## **UK P.E.A.C.E. Model (1990s)**

- Introduction & process explanation
- Cognitive interview approach
  - Mentally re-live circumstances
  - Limited interviewer interference
  - Interviewee has greater control
- Agreement on summary of interview
- Final comments and thoughts
- Understanding of next procedural steps



# EVOLUTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

## High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group 2016 Report

- Conducive context
- Develop and maintain rapport
- Elicit narratives, open-ended questions
- Assist memory recall
- Funnel questioning strategy
- Encourage highly detailed responses
- Strategically introduce evidence or information

# INTERVIEW CRITIQUE



# CONTENT ADVISORY

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The following audio clip contains potentially disturbing content regarding the deaths of two children.

# ANATOMY OF A BAD CONFESSION





# **EMPATHETIC & EQUITABLE INVESTIGATIONS**

# EMPATHETIC & EQUITABLE INVESTIGATIONS

## Rationale

- Relaxed interviewees give better information
- Non-adversarial investigators have more success
- Emphasis on human dignity
- Burden on investigators
- Avoid prejudicial influences
  - Confirmation bias
  - Like Me bias
  - Priming language

# DUE PROCESS

## **Fairness in...**

- The investigation
- Supportive measures
- Interim actions
- Interviews
- Access to information and evidence
- Determination/Outcome

# INTERVIEWING

- Remember this same story may have been repeated to multiple individuals
- Focus on what you need to know
- Plan strategic approach to interview
- Do your homework
- Communicate roles, expectations, purpose, timeline
- Develop questions ahead of time
- Strategize for breaks, pauses, Advisor conversation
- Choreograph interview start and conclusion



# STRATEGIZE

- How you will...
  - adapt to trauma indicators
  - build rapport with interviewee
  - assist in memory recall
  - test/assess credibility
  - evaluate and test evidence
  - handle disruptive Advisors
- Communication with co-investigator



# THE INVESTIGATION STRATEGY

# STRATEGY MEETING WITH COORDINATOR

- Review
  - Intake documentation
  - Other available information
  - Background info (as necessary)
    - Prior misconduct
    - Grades
    - Evaluations
    - Affiliations, allegiances, social groups
- Restrict meeting to the report/case at hand, avoid potential bias

# STRATEGY MEETING WITH COORDINATOR

- Clarify allegations
- Review applicable policies
- Identify appropriate procedures
- Ensure accurate notices
  - Who is responsible for Notice of Investigation and Allegations (NOIA)?
  - Timing of formal complaint filing
  - Additional notices
- Communication through investigation
  - Updates to the parties throughout the process

# STRATEGY MEETING WITH COORDINATOR

- Clarify roles & responsibilities
- TIXC as investigation supervisor
  - Information sharing restrictions
  - TIXC filling additional process role
  - Contact for Advisors
- Who schedules interviews?
- What should investigator refer or defer to TIXC?

# STRATEGY MEETING WITH COORDINATOR

- Identify implicated policy provisions
- Distill into models of proof
- Define scope of investigation
- Identify interview goals
- Identify potential obstacles/challenges
- Pattern and/or predation considerations
- Culture and/or climate investigations

# STRATEGY MEETING WITH COORDINATOR

- Establish preliminary investigation timeline
- Develop initial witness list
- Order of interviews
- What information is needed?
- What information is available?
- Anticipate allegiances
- Disrupt collusion potential

# STRATEGY NOTE: DISABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Are there accommodations needed per the disability services staff (based upon received documentation)?
- Are appropriate communication services available?
- Does the plan accommodate for extra time if needed?
- Are materials accessible in a way that meets known or potential needs?
- Supportive measure availability
- Allowance of additional support persons (and equitable reciprocation)



# STRATEGY MEETING WITH COORDINATOR

- Post-strategy meeting, there should be a plan
- TIXC confirms details in writing
- Investigator develops investigation plan
- Avoid material deviations
- Communication to parties

# STRATEGY EXERCISE

1. Read the intake report

2. Review institutional procedures

3. Identify important items to clarify with TIXC

4. Identify facts central to the allegations

5. Develop an initial witness list

6. Plan initial interview order and schedule

# STRATEGY EXERCISE

The first week of school, Gwen was studying on campus in Fleming Library. She went to check out a reading that was on reserve at the front desk of the library for one of her classes, Introduction to Economics. The next day, she got an email sent to her campus email address that said: “Hey Gwen, its Marley from the library. I took Econ when I was a freshman, so if you need any help just let me know.”

## STRATEGY EXERCISE (CONT.)

Gwen was surprised to get this email, but she didn't want to be rude, so she wrote back, "Thanks, but I think I got it so far lol!" She didn't recognize the name on the email account, Marley Noy, but she assumed that it was the student who worked at the library who helped her check out the reading that was on reserve. Marley wrote back and said, "Cool. How do you like campus so far? One of my friends is having a party after the game Saturday; you should come. It'll be a blast." They emailed back and forth a few times, and Marley sent her some selfies, but Gwen eventually stopped responding because she started to get a little creeped out.

## STRATEGY EXERCISE (CONT.)

One night, Gwen was at a party with a student named Carter, who she had been seeing for a few weeks. Gwen noticed that Marley was at the party. Doing her best to avoid Marley, Gwen circled the party, saying “hello” to friends and catching up with acquaintances. As the evening progressed, a few people expressed concern about Marley. Friends told her that Marley was asking questions about her. Carter also said Marley approached her and was asking about Gwen. The next day, Gwen received friend and follow requests and swipes from Marley on all of her social media and dating apps. She didn’t respond. She didn’t want to be friends with her, but she didn’t want to seem like a jerk either.

## STRATEGY EXERCISE (CONT.)

Earlier this week, Gwen was leaving her math class with her roommate Holly and saw Marley standing outside the math building by herself, staring at Gwen. Gwen sort of waved but kept walking. There have been some other weird things happening, and Gwen is starting to get a little nervous. She keeps finding notes on her car, which she parks on campus; they just have hearts and arrows on them. Someone wrote, “Gwen u r so hot” on the whiteboard outside her room and drew the same hearts and arrows she had been seeing on her car. Last week, she got a text on her cell from a blocked number that said, “Gwen I ❤️ you.” She freaked out and wrote back, “Who is this?? Leave me the fuck alone.” The person texted back, “Fuck you, you ugly bitch.”

# STRATEGY EXERCISE (CONT.)

Gwen shares with you that she doesn't want to make a big deal about her situation. She simply wants it to stop. Although she can't prove it, she feels like it must be Marley leaving these notes and sending texts. She has been avoiding Fleming Library and has been having friends walk her to and from her car at night. Other than Public Safety, she has also shared these concerns with her RA.

# STRATEGY EXERCISE

1. Read the intake report

2. Review institutional procedures

3. Identify important items to clarify with TIXC

4. Identify facts central to the allegations

5. Develop an initial witness list

6. Plan initial interview order and schedule



# INTERVIEWING CONSIDERATIONS

- Investigator bias
  - Approach to students, hourly employees
  - Stereotypical gender combinations
  - Sexual practices
- Cultural considerations
  - Presumptions attached to race, orientation, gender, religion
  - Teams, clubs, affiliations
  - Courting rituals
  - Communication, deception, rapport

# INTERVIEWING CONSIDERATIONS

- The Spiel
  - What information is required?
  - What information do they need?
    - Process
    - Role, expectations
    - Retaliation, amnesty
  - What would be helpful?
    - Clarify information source
    - Don't filter language
  - Anticipate reluctance, fear

# INTERVIEWING CONSIDERATIONS

- Prepare questions, but let them talk
  - Open-ended narratives
  - Listen for answers before additional questions are posed
    - Actively update list of questions
    - Note discrepancies or follow-up
- Active listening skills
  - Eye contact, head nodding, summarization
  - Avoid distractions (watch, computer, notes, phones)
- Questions posed by other parties



# COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING

# THE STANDARD INTERVIEW

- Interviewers briefly established rapport with the witness
- Open-ended questions
- Narrative answers
  - “Tell me what happened”
- Direct questions that focus on details
- Neutral delivery
- Little effort to facilitate memory recall
- Passively waiting for questions to answer
- Linear questions track anticipated sequence of events

# THE STANDARD INTERVIEW

- Reduces amount of information collected
  - Witnesses withhold information
  - Witnesses do not provide unsolicited info
  - Answers tend to be abbreviated
  - Witnesses may provide answers of which they are unsure
- Tends to disrupt the natural process of memory searching

# COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

- Based on:
  - Scientifically derived principles of memory and communication theory
  - Extensive analysis of law enforcement interviews
- Increases the amount of relevant information gathered
- Decreases the likelihood of recalling an event incorrectly
- Originally developed for use with victims and witnesses but since expanded

Geiselman, R.E., & Fisher, R. P. (2012). *Memory-enhancing techniques for Investigative Interviewing: The Cognitive Interview.*

# COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING

- Interview v. interrogation
- Focus on collecting best information
- The value of rapport
  - Willingness to talk openly
  - Reduced anxiety about sensitive subjects
    - Sexual misconduct creates defensiveness, mistrust
  - Reduced sense of feeling “judged”
  - Lowered defenses
- The Lies Children Tell



# QUESTIONING

Following v. Leading

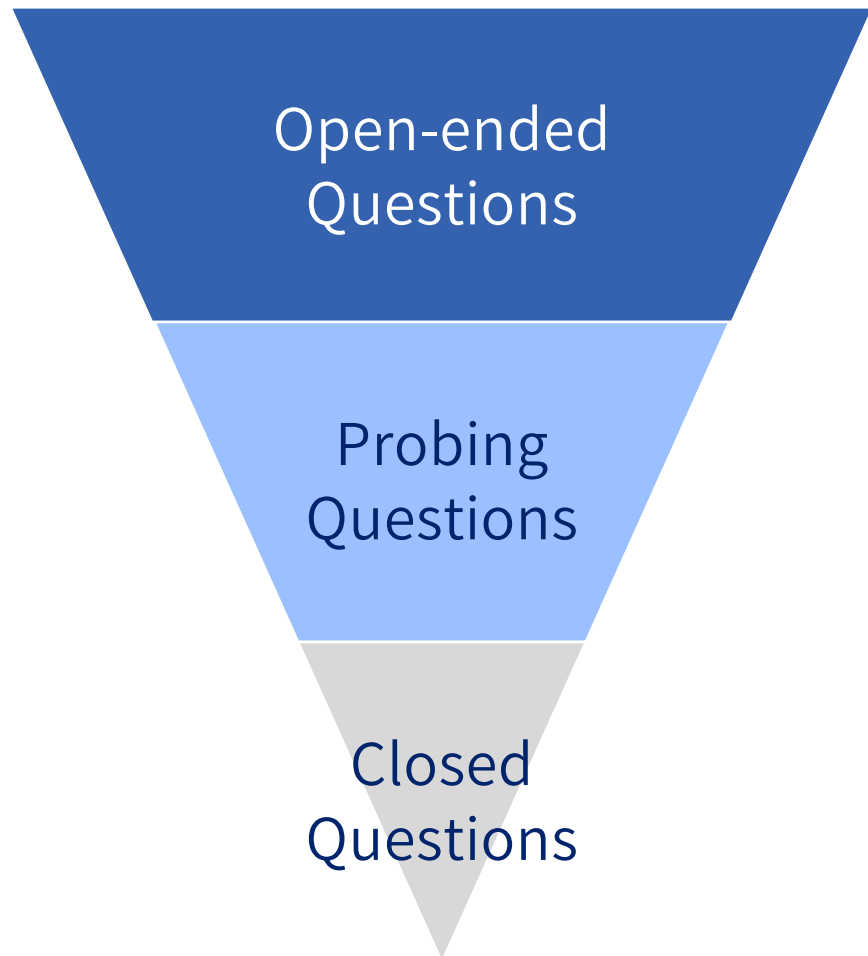
Explaining v. Defending

Clarifying v. Challenging

Curiosity v. Suspicion

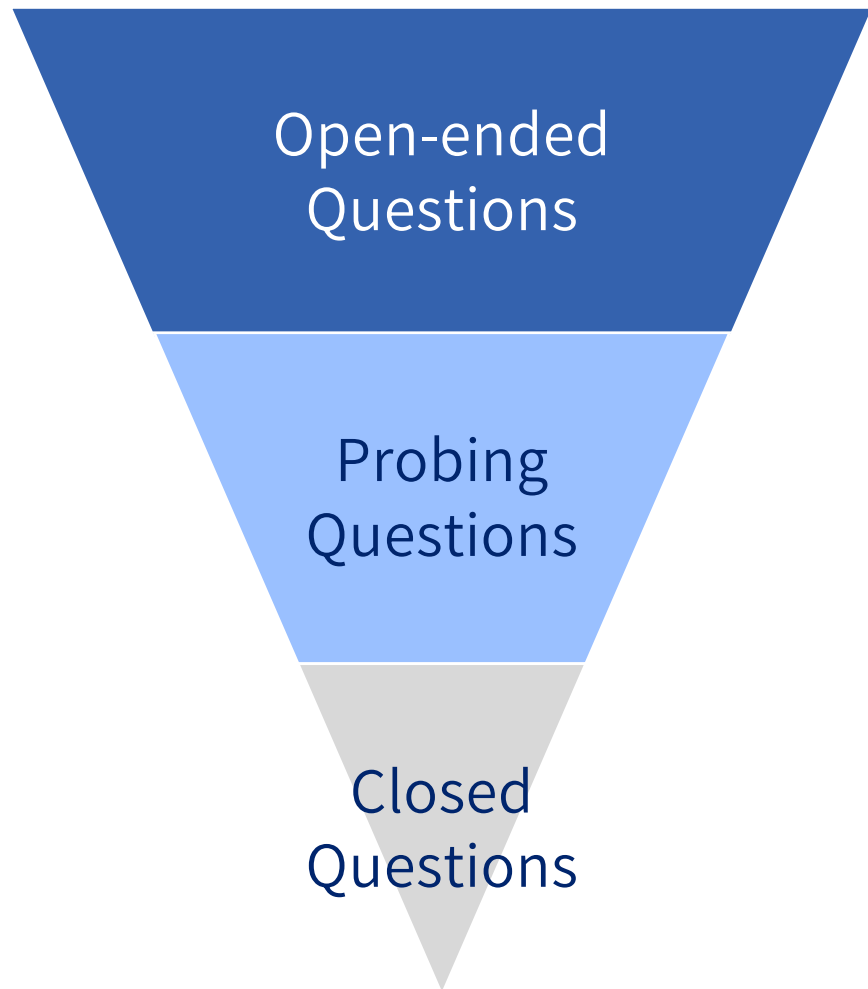
# QUESTIONING

- Funnel questioning technique
  - Open
  - Probing
  - Closed
- Open-ended questions invite a narrative
  - “What happened when...”
  - “Where did you go...”
  - “How would you describe...”



# QUESTIONING

- Probing focuses on areas of importance
  - Flesh out extra details
  - Explore motivations and intentions
- Closed questions establish and reestablish testimony
  - Test with repetition
  - Draw out disputed testimony



# THE COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Based on principles of memory and communication theory
- Found to produce significantly more accurate information
- Supported by research in cognitive psychology – techniques for enhancing memory retrieval

*The cognitive interview is a “systematic approach to interviewing witnesses with the goal of increasing the amount of relevant information obtained without compromising the rate of accuracy.”\**

\*Geiselman, R.E., & Fisher, R. P. (2014). Interviewing Witnesses and Victims. In M. St. Yves (Ed.), *Investigative Interviewing: Handbook of Best Practices*. Toronto: Thomson Reuters.

# THE COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Memory
- Multiple retrieval strategies
- Social Dynamics
- Rapport
- Active witness participation
- Communication
- Extensive, detailed responses
- Verbal and non-verbal expression

# SEQUENCE

## General considerations

- The recommended sequence is not a recipe for a cognitive interview
- Progress from open-ended questions to more specific follow-up
- Probing questions using multiple retrieval methods
- Interviewers must be flexible and able to adjust techniques as needed
- Toolbox to be used as necessary based on the witness and situation

# SEQUENCE

## Introduction

- Used to develop rapport
- Inform re: the process
- Establish baseline communication expectations
- Reinstatement of the context

## Transfer Control

- Witness directs the interview
- Active participation
- Volunteer information

## Probe

- Identify central issues
- Explore factual detail
- Funnel
- Triangulate
- Corroborate

## Recall

- Facilitate recall
- Verbal and non-verbal expressions
- Sensory exploration
- Extensive detail

# FOLLOW-UP

- Probe scenes and images
  - Go to the scene to jog recall (careful of re-traumatizing)
- Recall of one detail can trigger recall of others
- Ask for information repeatedly using varied methods
  - Different perspectives
  - Different chronology (reverse order)
  - Facts, feelings, observations



# FOLLOW-UP

- Describe the event from a different physical or conceptual perspective
  - Can you describe this from Annie's point of view? Put yourself where Annie was standing . . . describe what she saw.
- Draw a picture or review photos/schematics

# FOLLOW-UP

- Jog recall through senses, not an event narrative:
  - “Are there specific scents or smells...?”
  - “Are there specific sounds (music, noise, snoring, dialogue, sirens, phones, texts, etc.)...?”
  - “Are there specific tastes ...?”
  - “Are there specific tactile (touching) experiences ...?”
  - “Are there specific sights or things you see ...?”

# FOCUS ON SPECIFICS

- Deep dive into detailed recall
- Review
- Check for accuracy and consistency
- Read notes back
- Correct errors or omissions
- New recollections or details
- Clarify contradictions or ambiguities

# CLOSE

- Contact you if they have new information
- Extends the life of the interview
- May result in more/better detail
- Anything else to add?
- Any individuals we should talk to?
- Any specific questions we should ask?

# CONSIDERATIONS

- This method requires the interviewer to essentially take the witness back to the scene
- Raises concerns of re-traumatization
- Interviews will likely take more time – schedule accordingly
- Consider explaining the interview approach
- Improves promptness of process
- Two investigators – the person asking questions must focus and stay with the witness during the recall process

# RAPPORT

# BUILDING RAPPORT

- Interviewer comfort level
- Self-awareness – personal prejudice/bias
  - Self-diagnosis
  - Self-correction
  - Self-improvement
- Trappings of authority
  - “Me” wall
- Proximity

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Dignified approach v. friendship
- Understanding v. agreeing
- Sympathy v. empathy
- Maintaining neutrality
- Practice active listening statements
  - “I understand” instead of “that makes sense”
  - “I know this is difficult” instead of “I’m sorry”



# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Dress
- Location
- Taking notes
- Recording
- Responses to emotion
- Length
- Breaks
- Entry/exit
- Buffer time

# DIFFICULT WITNESSES

- Collaborative interviewing
- Mirroring
  - “Help me understand”
- Review of factual evidence
- Accept what is shared
- Highlight conflicts
- Draw out contradictory statements
  - “Make this make sense for me”
- The Columbo approach



# MEMORY

# MEMORY

- Memories are stored in three ways: sensory, short-term, and long-term
  - **Sensory information** lasts just a few seconds
    - If the brain doesn't attach meaning, the information is lost
  - **Short-term information** lasts up to 30 seconds
    - Phone number, copying a sentence from one document to another
  - **Long-term information** gets filed away
    - Meaningful connections vs. rote repetition

# MEMORY

- Long-term storage is strengthened through association
  - Memory is not like a copy of a file – it gets filtered
    - Prior experiences (an individual’s as well as others’)
    - Beliefs
    - Education
    - Perspective
- Accessing memory means traversing those association pathways
- The result is a mix of factual recollection as well as filtered perception that may alter the facts

# MEMORY AND TRAUMA

- Trauma may cause the brain to block access
  - When an event is too painful, information is still stored
  - Access may be hindered or prohibited out of self-preservation
  - Trauma-informed interviewing techniques lower the brain's defensive measures
  - When the interviewee is in a safe environment, the brain is more willing to access and experience traumatic memories

# MEMORY AND TRAUMA

- Traumatic memories are highly filtered
  - Self-blaming
    - “Maybe I was too friendly”
    - “I dressed cute because I wanted to look professional – maybe I gave them the wrong impression”
  - Normalization
    - Engaging in subsequent consensual behaviors
    - Acting as though nothing is wrong
  - Lack of recall
  - Denial
- Trauma can impact complainants, respondents, and witnesses

# RECALL

- Repeated recollection can strengthen recall and improve accuracy
  - Access pathways literally thicken
  - CAUTION: holistic recall will yield far more accurate information
  - Isolated questioning on critical moments will yield a larger variation of factual information mixed with perception
  - Context improves accuracy
- Focus on broader recall, including innocuous details
- Use techniques to repeat events in different order, from different perspective



# QUESTIONING

- Be empathetic, but don't avoid repetition
- Tailor questions to take in the whole incident, not just pivotal moments
  - May require delaying closed-ended or funnel questioning
- Tie critical details to nonessential ones for continuity and improved factual accuracy
- Make space and time for recall to occur organically

# INTERVIEW EXERCISE

## Step 1

Interviewee  
Review the circumstances prompt.

Interviewer  
Read the interview outcomes sheet.



## Step 2

Do not share details from your respective prompts.

Interviewer  
Conduct interview and take notes related to interview outcomes sheet.



## Step 3

Interviewee  
What helped, what hindered, what distracted, etc.

Interviewer  
What approaches did you use, effective/not effective, etc.



# TRAUMA BASICS

# TRAUMA

- Brain responds to threat with defense cascade—not conscious decision making—beginning with freeze, which serves two purposes:
  - First: attempt to hide from detection, avoid threat/predator; done as an evolutionary reaction, not a conscious strategy or logically determined decision
  - Second: assess threat in preparation for response. (Pre-frontal cortex re-engages if assessment indicates threat has passed. Otherwise, the defense cascade continues.)

# TRAUMA

- Habitual behavior
  - Characterized by habitual (simplistic) speech/thoughts. The brain is not problem solving for speech or thoughts, rather, prioritizing the defense cascade.
  - Conflict/confusion between attachment circuitry and defense circuitry
  - When the first has been stimulated, the latter is less active. This delays defense engagement when the situation changes to threatening.

# TRAUMA

- Immobilization may occur due to three reactionary brain processes: dissociation, tonic immobility, and collapsed mobility
  - **Dissociation:** disconnection from body and experience; a reflex when escape is not a perceived possibility
  - **Tonic immobility:** inability to move or talk; often after a struggle or failed attempt to flee
    - (“I tried to fight, but I couldn’t”)

# TRAUMA

- **Collapsed mobility:** inability to move or talk; decrease in heart rate, of muscle tone
  - Some may describe “pretending to sleep” but it was not actually a conscious decision
  - May result in fainting
  - Offset is more gradual than with tonic

# LONGER TERM

- Hyper vigilance
- Sensitivity to triggers and re-traumatization
- Lower sense of safety
- Unreliable/decreased assessment of threat
- Brain reacts to threat
  - Material threat or re-experienced/triggered
- The brain is not just impaired by traumatic events; the complex processing is altered



# TRAUMA

- Recipients have worked to account for trauma in resolution processes with mixed success
- Some tendency to over- or under-compensate
  - Difficulty with recollection
  - Mixed up chronology
  - Absent or vague memory
  - Emerging memories
  - Variation in testimony or conflicting details
  - Total lack of recall
- *Doe v. Syracuse* (2019)

# TRAUMA-INFUSED

- “Trauma-infused” practices serve to better understand and communicate/interview
- Signs of trauma and related speech/actions should not be used to prove or disprove statements made by an interviewee
- The presence of trauma symptoms does not establish credibility
- The absence of “typical” signs does not equate to deception

# TRAUMA-INFUSED

- Infusion of trauma-informed practices should inform investigators' approach
  - Understand what you're observing and why
  - Interview location and setup
  - Plan for use of time, breaks
  - Questioning strategy and techniques
  - Assessment of credibility
- This is not intended to diagnose or label behaviors
- Strictly avoid clinical classification and use descriptive verbiage in notes/reports

# RECALL AND CUES

- Memory
- Time perception
- Layers, gaps, delay
- Central vs. peripheral details
  - Perception of the individual, not any tangible standard
  - Not encoded in the brain the same way, some details are recalled while others may be lost, never encoded at all, or may even change/develop over time.
- Sensory cues



# CREDIBILITY

# WHAT IS CREDIBILITY?

- Accuracy and reliability of information
- “Credible” is not synonymous with “truthful”
- Memory errors, evasion, misleading **may** impact
- Primary factor is corroboration
- Avoid **too much** focus on irrelevant inconsistencies
- Source + content + plausibility
- Trauma-informed approach should be consistent

# CHALLENGES ASSESSING CREDIBILITY

**Credibility Assessment:** “The Complainant, Respondent, and all witnesses seemed credible during their interviews. Therefore we are unable to make a determination as to whether policy was violated.”

**Credibility Assessment:** “The Complainant appeared more credible, as she was cooperative and open, where the Respondent appeared agitated and annoyed during his interview.”

**Credibility Assessment:** “We found the Respondent not credible and found the Complainant credible.”

# DOE V. BAUM

903 F.3D 575 (6TH CIR. 2018)

- If a student at a public university is accused of misconduct, the university must hold some sort of hearing before imposing a sanction as serious as expulsion or suspension; and when the university's determination turns **on the credibility** of the accuser, the accused, or witnesses, that hearing must include an opportunity for cross-examination.
- If **credibility** is in question and material to the outcome of a university student disciplinary proceeding, due process requires cross-examination.
- *See also – Doe v. University of Cincinnati*, 872 F.3d 393 (6th Cir. 2017).



# HAIKAK V. UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

933 F.3D 56 (1ST CIR. 2019)

- “The [Sixth Circuit] took [its] conclusion one step further than we care to go, announcing a categorical rule that the state school had to provide for cross-examination by the accused or his representative in all cases turning **on credibility determinations.**”
  - If the school chooses to question the accuser in place of the accused, it must sufficiently probe **the credibility** of the accuser and the accusations.
  - No reason to believe that questioning of a complaining witness by a neutral party is so fundamentally flawed as to create a categorically unacceptable risk of erroneous deprivation.
  - Interrogation of the accuser by an independent fact-finder may be enough to satisfy the guarantee of due process.

# 2020 TITLE IX REGULATIONS

- For higher education institutions, at the mandated hearing, the decision-maker must permit each party, through their Advisor, to ask the other party and any witnesses all relevant questions and follow-up questions, including those challenging credibility.
- For K-12 schools, with or without a hearing, the decision-maker must, after the recipient has incorporated the parties' responses to the investigation report, ask each party and any witnesses any relevant questions and follow-up questions, including those challenging credibility, that a party wants asked of any party or witnesses.

# COMMON CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENT ERRORS

- Misplaced emphasis on nonverbal indicators of deception such as nervousness/anxiety
- Misplaced emphasis on inconsistency of information provided by an interviewee
  - Research shows truthful memory recall includes the natural omission or subsequent recollection of details
- Confusion about memory
  - Stress and emotion may lead to enhancement of memory or to the disruption of encoding and retrieval processes

# COMMON CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENT ERRORS (CONT.)

- Misplaced focus on the status of the parties
  - No scientific studies support the notion of neurobiological response differences between perpetrators and victims
- Bias in interviews
  - Presumptions of guilt can influence credibility assessments

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

- “Liars” experience greater cognitive overload
- Truth tellers can generally provide more detail/information than “liars”
- “Liars” prepare for questions they anticipate
- “Liars” develop a relatively fixed narrative that they can provide consistently
- Interview tactics that leverage differences in cognitive processing and strategy use between “liars” and truth tellers
- Verbal cues and elicitation of verifiable details are most diagnostic of credibility

Vrij, A. (2019). Deception and Truth Detection When Analyzing Nonverbal and Verbal Cues. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 33, 160–167.

# INTERVIEW TACTICS

- Reverse Chronological Order
- Use of a Model Statement
- Asking unexpected questions
- Asking the individual to recall information in unexpected ways (e.g., sketch)
- Asking interviewees for details that the investigator can check
  - Truth tellers generally add more “checkable” details
  - Liars provide details that are difficult to verify
- The Funnel

# CREDIBILITY

## Inherent Plausibility

- “Does this make sense?”
- Be careful of bias influencing sense of “logical”

## Motive to Falsify

- Do they have a reason to lie?

## Corroboration

- Aligned testimony and/or physical evidence

## Past Record

- Is there a history of similar behavior?

## Demeanor (use caution!)

- Do they seem to be lying or telling the truth?

*Enforcement Guidance  
on Vicarious Employer  
Liability for Unlawful  
Harassment by Supervisors*

EEOC (1999)

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Inherent Plausibility

- Does what the party described make sense?
  - Consideration of environmental factors, trauma, relationships
- Is it believable on its face?
- “Plausibility” is a function of “likeliness.”
  - Would a reasonable person in the same scenario do the same things? Why or why not?
  - Are there more likely alternatives based on the evidence?



# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Inherent Plausibility (Cont.)

- Is the party's statement consistent with the evidence?
- Is their physical location or proximity reasonable?
  - Could they have heard what they said they heard?
  - Were there other impediments? (e.g., darkness, obstructions)
- How good is their memory?
  - Temporal proximity based on age of allegations
  - "I think," "I'm pretty sure," "It would make sense"

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Motive to Falsify

- Does the party have a reason to lie?
- What's at stake if the allegations are true?
  - Think academic or career implications
  - Also personal or relationship consequences
- What if the allegations are false?
  - Other pressures on the Complainant – failing grades, dramatic changes in social/personal life, other academic implications
- Reliance on written document during testimony

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Corroborating Evidence

- Strongest indicator of credibility
- Independent, objective authentication
  - Party says they went to dinner, provides receipt
  - Party describes text conversation, provides screenshots
- Corroboration of central vs. environmental facts
- Not simply alignment with friendly witnesses

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Corroborating Evidence (Cont.)

- Can include contemporaneous witness accounts
  - More “separate” the witness, greater the credibility boost
- Outcry witnesses
  - Does what party said then line up with what they say now?
- Pay attention to allegiances
  - Friends, roommates, teammates, group membership
  - This can work both directions (e.g., honest roommate)

# TRIANGULATING CREDIBILITY

- One of the least used and least understood methods of assessing credibility is the triangulation method, which is rooted in abductive reasoning.
- Analysis of credibility often ignores this approach because it is less dispositive than corroboration, but it can still be enough to meet the standard of proof.
- Triangulation is simply being faced with two plausible explanations (B & C) and deciding which is the more plausible (likely) based on the fact that you know A & D to be true.
- Based on what you know about A & D, B is more likely than C.

# TRIANGULATING CREDIBILITY

- It's called triangulation because ABC forms a more coherent triangle than ABD, based on knowing all four data points. It's more of a stretch to draw the line from A-to-D than A-to-C.
- Triangulation is more helpful when the standard of proof is preponderance, as opposed to clear and convincing evidence.
- Triangulation is the formal way of processing what leads you to determine why something is inherently plausible.
- When you determine inherent plausibility, it is because you are comparing, and deciding that B is more likely than C as an explanation or a fact to have occurred.

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Prior Record

- Is there evidence or records of past misconduct?
- Are there determinations of responsibility for substantially similar misconduct?
- Check record for past allegations
  - Even if found “not responsible,” may evidence pattern or proclivity
- Written/verbal statements, pre-existing relationship
- Use caution; past violations do not mean current violations

# FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CREDIBILITY

## Demeanor

- BE VERY CAREFUL
  - Humans are excellent at picking up non-verbal cues
  - Humans are terrible at spotting liars
- Is the party uncomfortable, uncooperative, resistant?
- Certain lines of questioning – agitated, argumentative
- Look for indications of discomfort or resistance
- Make a note to dive deeper, discover source



# OTHER FACTORS

- Credentials and expertise – established
- Neutrality
- Sobriety
- Continuation of the behavior
- Previous, similar, good faith allegations

# MAKING CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENTS

- Look at consistency of story – substance and chronology of statements.
- Consider inherent plausibility of all information given.
- Is the evidence provided consistent with other credible evidence?
- Look for the amount of detail (facts) provided. Factual detail should be assessed against general allegations, accusations, excuses, or denials that have no supporting detail.
- Pay attention to non-verbal behavior, but do not read too much into it

# CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENTS IN INVESTIGATION REPORTS

**Regulations permit investigators to make credibility recommendations which can serve as a roadmap for Decision-maker but are not binding**

- NOT GOOD  
~~“The decision-maker should find Mark to be unbelievable in his testimony about having received consent for the following reasons...”~~
- GOOD  
“Mark’s testimony about X contradicts Mariana’s testimony about X, and the accounts of Witness 1 and Witness 7 aligned with Mariana’s testimony, not Mark’s, during the investigation.”

# CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENTS IN INVESTIGATION REPORTS

- Point the decision-maker without analysis or weighting
  - “Decision-makers will want to carefully review Mary’s testimony as to whether the conduct was welcome, in light of the testimony of W1.”
  - “Decision-makers may wish to focus on reconciling the testimony offered by Joe and by Witness 2 with respect to who engaged in the conduct first.”

# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

## Step 1

Read the fact pattern and statements from Omar and Devya.

Highlight elements that factor into credibility assessment.



## Step 2

What information boosts Omar or Devya's credibility?

What evidence could potentially bolster or detract from Omar or Devya's credibility?



## Step 3

Outline the evidence that impacts each party's credibility.

Itemize evidence you would like to collect related to credibility.

# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

Omar and Devya have been friends since freshman year. Devya texted Omar and they met up at Devya's apartment before a party one weekend and did several shots. Devya felt comfortable with Omar because he was openly gay, and she asked him to help her pick her outfit for the evening, taking her clothes off in front of him multiple times as she tried different combinations. Omar would pull on and adjust her clothes as he considered each outfit, but Devya wasn't bothered by the physical contact, even when he pressed her breasts together to try to improve the appearance of her cleavage in one shirt.

# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

When they got to the party, Devya lost track of Omar for a bit. She was happy to find him a little later, and they had fun dancing. Devya said Omar “grinded” on her, which was fine, but then he started putting his hands on her and groping her, which she was not okay with. They had danced together before, but this night felt different to her. Devya said Omar was much more drunk than she had ever seen him, and even though she continued to pull his hands away from her he wouldn’t stop touching her body, including grabbing her breasts. Devya could feel Omar’s erect penis through his pants when he rubbed against her.

# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

At one point, Devya took Omar’s hands into hers so they would be off her body, shouted “stop!” and they danced while holding hands. After a little bit, he put his hands back on her and rubbed her butt and started pretending to spank her. He wasn’t hitting her hard, and it was clear he thought it was funny, but she didn’t. She took his hands in hers and started dancing again. After a few minutes, a friend came up to Devya and asked if she was okay because she looked upset. Devya and her friend left the dance floor and her friend drove Devya home. During the drive, the friend mentioned that she saw what Omar was doing and that he seemed out of control. Devya talked to the same friend a little the next day, and they agreed that Devya should report Omar.



# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

Omar denies the allegations. He agrees with Devya's account of the evening but does not remember the groping and grinding. He just remembers them dancing and having fun, and said that they were both touching each other, but "just in a fun, playful way." Omar doesn't remember Devya's friend, he just remembered that all of a sudden, Devya was gone. He texted to see where she went, but she never responded. Omar agrees that he drank a lot, but says he remembers the whole evening and thinks Devya is blowing it out of proportion. "Plus," he says, "I'm gay."

# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

One of Omar's texts to Devya from after the party said "Hey, where did you go? We were having sooo much fun. Want to grab sushi tonight?" Devya wants Omar to understand what he did is wrong. He was out of control and he made Devya feel like a piece of meat with no control over her own body. She wants Omar to stay away from her.

# CREDIBILITY EXERCISE

## Step 1

Read the fact pattern and statements from Omar and Devya.

Highlight elements that factor into credibility assessment.



## Step 2

What information boosts Omar or Devya's credibility?

What evidence could potentially bolster or detract from Omar or Devya's credibility?



## Step 3

Outline the evidence that impacts each party's credibility.

Itemize evidence you would like to collect related to credibility.



# **SEX AND GENDER-INCLUSIVE INVESTIGATIONS**

# TERMINOLOGY

- **Sex:** references chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, and genitalia
- **Gender:** refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with biological sex
- **Gender Identity:** internal sense of gender
- **Gender Expression:** outward expression of gender, often through clothing, behavior, posture, mannerisms, speech patterns, and activities
- **Sexual Orientation:** attracted to sexually or romantically, on a continuum (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, and pansexual)

# TERMINOLOGY (CONT.)

- **Cisgender:** Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth
- **Transgender:** Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex. A trans male has transitioned or is transitioning F→M. A trans female has transitioned or is transitioning M→F.
  - A person's current identity is likely the only identity that matters, unless they make it point to make sure you know they are trans
- **Gender-Variant/Diverse:** Denoting or relating to a person whose behavior or appearance varies or is diverse from prevailing cultural and social expectations about what is appropriate for their gender

# TERMINOLOGY (CONT.)

- **Gender Fluid:** Denoting or relating to a person who does not identify themselves as having a fixed gender
- **Nonbinary:** a term used to describe individuals who may experience a gender identity that is neither exclusively woman or man or is in between or beyond both genders
- **Queer:** Denoting or relating to a sexual or gender identity that does not correspond to established ideas of sexuality and gender, especially heterosexual norms
- **Intersex:** A term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male

# TERMINOLOGY (CONT.)

- **Bisexual:** attracted to people of the same as well as other genders
- **Heterosexual:** attracted to people of a gender other than their own
- **Asexual:** minimal or no sexual attraction to others
- **Pansexual:** attracted to people regardless of sex or gender



# TERMINOLOGY (CONT.)

- **Misgendering:** Refers to an inadvertent -- or more commonly intentional -- reference to a nonbinary person or transgender or transitioning person by a binary sex assignment or pronouns that do not match their gender identity or expression, or that are not their chosen pronoun(s)
  - Those who are cisgender should consider how it would feel if others insisted on calling you by a pronoun, name, or title that did not reflect your sex/gender
- **Deadnaming:** The use of the birth or other former name of any of the above categories of people without their consent when the individual has identified a different name or pronoun

# VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Violence and  
Intimate Partner  
Violence Can Happen  
to Anyone...

- regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, and gender expression
- regardless of sexual orientation

# INCLUSIVITY EXERCISE

- What types of challenges might disrupt or impede an effective investigation based on the individuals and/or sexual practices involved?
  - Think about campus culture and presumptions related to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.
- How does the way an investigator responds to descriptions of preferences or practices that are “new” or “unfamiliar” to the investigator impact rapport with an interviewee?

# RELUCTANCE TO REPORT

- Concern about a homophobic response
- Concern about preconception that sexual assault cannot occur between same-sex partners
- Fear of exposing LGBTQIA community to negative stereotypes
- Fear of the impact a report may have on a small, sometimes close-knit community at the school
- Fear of reaction of family and friends
- Fear of institution not understanding their identity, expression, or orientation

# RELUCTANCE TO REPORT (CONT.)

- Fear of being outed and implications for medical treatment
- Concern about how “systems” will respond, especially law enforcement
- Previous negative experiences with school staff, the law, or community members
- Fear that male-on-male sexual violence in connection with hazing/bullying will be reduced to “boys being boys”

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVIEWING

- Educate yourself and your community
  - Do not expect parties to “educate you”
  - Ask for additional education or training if needed
- Be mindful of how power dynamics and targeting can come into play
- Assume nothing and allow for self-identification
- Provide a safe, non-judgmental, and respectful environment
- Stick to the facts

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVIEWING

- A visible reaction may negatively impact rapport
- Use inclusive language; reflect language used by the parties and witnesses during interviews and in all communication
- Anticipate heightened confidentiality concerns
- Use your school/campus/district/community-based experts
- Be aware of your biases
  - Heteronormative stereotypes/assumptions
  - Ignorance or lack of experience
  - Presumptions about consent

# BIAS

- What bias is (explicit, implicit, confirmation, etc.)
- How to detect bias, dislike, improper doubt, prejudice, prejudgment, or favoritism
- How to correct bias
- How bias can arise in investigations
- How bias can arise in decision-making
- The bias that trauma-informed ideology and “start by believing” can create if not contextualized appropriately
- Bias in training materials



# BIAS (CONT.)

- Victim-blaming biases
- Victim-favoring biases (such as from medical evidence)
- The potential effect of systemic biases on outcomes and sanctions



# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

- Forensic Interview Model
- General Recommendations

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

- Young v. very young students
  - High/middle/elementary school
- Gender considerations
  - More important to align investigator with party?
- Parent/guardian involvement
  - Timing of notice, parent as Advisor
- Interview locations
- K-12 v. Higher Education – differences in approach

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Forensic Interview Model – Key Phases

- Rapport-building phase
  - Introductions
  - Set expectations
  - Practice narrative telling
    - “Tell me something about yourself”
    - “What do you like to do for fun?”

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Forensic Interview Model – Key Phases (Cont.)

- Substantive phase
  - Discussion of incident with details and clarification
- Closure phase
  - Address socioeconomic needs of child
  - Connect with support and resources
  - Field questions from child

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Trauma

- Impact of past and/or current trauma
- Coordination with law enforcement, child protective services, etc.
  - Limit number of interviews and impact on child
  - Multiple interviews may be necessary for a child to feel comfortable enough to provide a complete narrative

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Memory

- Child-specific considerations that impact memory, recall, perception of an experience, ability to communicate, comprehension, attention span, etc.
  - Age
  - Physical and developmental disabilities
  - Cultural/language barriers
  - Emotional needs
  - Socioeconomic status

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Reluctance to Disclose

- Age of child
- Relationship to responding party
- Family relationships
- Level of parental support
- Fear
- Social and/or community influences



# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Environment

- Child-friendly
- Comfortable
- Neutral setting
- Consider access to paper and markers (age dependent)
- Who is present for interview?
  - Team investigator approach may not be ideal
  - Potential influence and/or disruption by others present

# INTERVIEWING MINORS

## General Recommendations

- Explain that you are going to be asking questions and you need them to be honest when they answer
  - It is okay to say, “I don’t know,” or, “I don’t understand”
  - There are no right or wrong answers
  - Correct me if I say something wrong
- Use indirect questions provide a margin of safety for the child
  - Example: “Some students believe that it is nice for a teacher to hug a student. What do you think?”
- Limit the number of times a minor is interviewed; their testimony is easily influenced by the way questions are asked

Adapted From: Garbarino, J. and Scott, F.M. (1992). *What Children Can Tell Us: Eliciting, Interpreting, and Evaluating Critical Information from Children*

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## The Interview

- Ask an open-ended, non-leading question that allows child to give you their narrative without interrupting
  - “Tell me why you came to talk to me today.”
  - “Do you know why I’m here to talk to you today?”
- If child acknowledges incident, follow-up with:
  - “Tell me everything that happened.”

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## The Interview

- If child doesn't acknowledge incident, may need to ask more closed-ended, targeted questions
  - Utilize information you have as part of allegations
  - Incremental approach (talk about unrelated issues then ease into allegations)
  - Interview aids (e.g., Human figure drawings, dolls, etc.)

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## The Interview

- Use reflection and paraphrasing
- Assess whether multiple incidents occurred
  - “Did this happen one time or more than one time?”
  - Use prompts to differentiate instances (e.g. ,first time, last time, etc.)
- Silence/hesitation is okay
- Assess any possible coaching
  - Ask about previous conversations
    - “Have you talked to anyone else about that?”
    - “How did you find out about that?”

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Ending the Interview

- “Is there anything else you want to share?”
- “Is there anything else I need to know?”
- “Do you have anything you want to ask me?”
- Thank child for speaking with you
- Assess and offer support and resources
  - In-school and community-based
  - Counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.
  - Academic support
  - Safety planning
  - Others?

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Recommendations for Early Elementary-Aged Children

- Encourage the child to start with a narrative of what happened before asking about specifics
- Use short, simple sentences that incorporate the child's terms
  - If you are unfamiliar with their terms, ask: “What do you call X?” or “Tell me about...”
- Use names rather than pronouns
- Rephrase rather than restate a question if the child does not understand what is being asked
- Avoid question involving time

Adapted From: Garbarino, J. and Scott, F.M. (1992). *What Children Can Tell Us: Eliciting, Interpreting, and Evaluating Critical Information from Children*

# INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

## Recommendations for Older Elementary-Aged Children

- Try to determine what the child understands by asking them to repeat what was said rather than asking, “Do you understand?”
- Try not to follow every answer with another question
  - Comment
  - Ask the child to elaborate
  - Acknowledge the child’s response

Adapted From: Garbarino, J. and Scott, F.M. (1992). *What Children Can Tell Us: Eliciting, Interpreting, and Evaluating Critical Information from Children*





Association of  
Title IX Administrators

**Questions?**



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