



MARCUS WILLIAMS TRAINING ACADEMY

Investigations Certification Program



# INTERVIEWING

Lesson 3: Investigations Certification Program



## ABOUT ME



### Marcus Williams

President/Subject Matter Expert

- MS in Criminal Justice
- 20 years investigative experience
- NCIS, Brigham Young University, Pentagon (responded to 9/11 attacks)



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Honesty Up Front

- I can't make you a good interviewer in one hour.
- This class will teach you the basic fundamentals of interviewing.
- This is a skill that takes practice.



### GETTING BETTER

- Record yourself. Watch later and critique your questions and technique.
- Ask a colleague to watch your interview and take notes.
- Attend advanced interview training.



### INTERVIEW METHOD

- There are multiple interview methods out there.
- You can find training and certification for each method.
- The best method is a combination of techniques that works for you.



## INTERVIEW STYLE

- Every interviewer has a unique style, developed over time with lots of practice.
- What works for you may not work for someone else.
- You need to be flexible to connect with the interviewee.



## PURPOSE

### GENERAL:

- An interview is an opportunity to gather as much information as possible regarding a specific incident or series of incidents.

### SPECIFIC: Complainant/Respondent/Witness:

- Decide up front what information you hope to glean from each interviewee. Know what you need before going in, but be open to discover new information.





## PREPARATION

- Schedule: Work with the interviewee's schedule if possible. You want them to be open and willing to talk. Forcing an appointment may be necessary at times, but means you've already built a barrier before you start.
- Location: Inviting, comfortable interview space. Professional. Not too big, but with room enough for a support person.
- Adapt if needed.



## PREPARATION

Know your case:

- Know details.
- Know names.
- Know what they are supposed to be corroborating.
- Research background if relevant.

Questions:

- Interview vs. Deposition



## INTRODUCTION

- Ensure interviewee is comfortable and feels safe (door open or closed, etc).
- Build rapport, be professional and competent.
  - Do not try to become interviewee's friend.
- Answer any initial questions.
- Explain the process and options – be open about available choices and consequences.
  - Be willing to spend time explaining and ensuring interviewee understands.
  - Be honest about potential outcomes.
- Answer process questions, do not pressure into making certain decision.
- Acknowledge that the conversation may be difficult or painful for them.



## INTERVIEW

Begin the interview when all of their process related questions have been answered:

- Explain they can stop or take a break at any time.
- Explain you are going to take notes (or record) to help you remember what is said.
- Explain you were not there and you understand everyone remembers and sees things differently. It is normal if there are gaps in memory or confusion. Only share what you remember and it is okay to say "I don't know."



## INTERVIEW

Ask the interviewee to describe what happened to them in their own words and own way:

- Remember, if this is not a witness interview, they are describing something that either they did or that happened to them. It is a very different perspective.
- Explain the importance of giving all information, despite their perception of its appearance.



## INTERVIEW

- Explain you will ask follow up questions afterwards.
- Allow the interviewee to talk. DO NOT interrupt their narrative.
- Do not fear silence. Do not ask additional questions or make comments to fill a silent pause.
- Ask open ended follow up questions. Do NOT ask sequential questions.
  - "Tell me more about..." instead of "And then what happened..."



## INTERVIEW

- If you need to ask a more direct or "hard" question, explain why first. Do not be afraid to explain why you are asking. Be clear and direct.
- Ask sensory questions if relevant.
  - How did it feel when...
  - What were you thinking during...
  - Describe what you were feeling, touching, smelling, seeing, etc.



## INTERVIEW

- Review important elements with the interviewee to ensure you are understanding accurately what was said.
- Ask if there is anything else the interviewee feels you should know that you may not have asked.





## ADDRESSING DISCREPANCIES

- Even after asking specific questions, you may have concerns regarding discrepancies in their story or details that don't seem reasonable.

### YOU MUST DECIDE:

- Press the issue now.
- Wait for a follow-up interview.
- After further investigation, additional interviews, and evidence review, your questions may be resolved.
- Easier to confront discrepancies with evidence.



## TIMING

- Backwards from criminal case. Coordinate with LE.
- Refer to your policy, but in many administrative cases, the respondent must be informed of the allegations when the investigation is initiated. You do not have the luxury of taking your time to develop evidence before the respondent interview.
- Consider taking the initial interview and scheduling a follow-up.
- RISK: May change their mind and refuse the follow-up interview later. Sometimes you only get one chance.



## BEFORE CONCLUDING

- Take a break to review your notes and the follow. Have you obtained the information you set out to obtain?
- Do you now have additional leads?
- Ask for names of other witnesses.
- Request and arrange receipt of evidence.
- Ask any follow-up questions.



## POST INTERVIEW

- Thank interviewee for sharing what happened.
- Provide your contact information.
- Answer questions about available resources/interim accommodations.
- Explain memories may return or be triggered and ask the interviewee to record them somehow to share with you later.



## POST INTERVIEW

- Explain you may have some follow up questions in the future.
- Ask for a list of witnesses - direct or indirect.
- Invite interviewee to contact you with any questions or concerns.
- Explain what happens next in the investigation and process.



## POST INTERVIEW

- Do not promise any specific outcome.
- Answer any questions, leave door open for any future questions.
- Encourage interviewee to focus on mental and physical wellness.



### MORE FLIES WITH HONEY

- Your goal is to obtain information, which they are more likely to share with someone they trust and someone who listens.
- Be open.
- Active listening.
- Don't respond with emotion or outbursts.
- Even if you had to ask hard questions, they should understand why.
- They should leave feeling heard, not frustrated.



### NO PERFECT INTERVIEW

- Every interviewee arrives with stress, baggage, bias, and a plan of what they want to say.
- Adapt.
- Remember your goal.





## CONCLUSION

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Critique yourself.
- Prepare.
- Be open.
- Keep your mouth shut and ears open.
- Be transparent about the process, but not the case.

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