

Kim Madden: A one week training does not make a forensic interviewer and to give that basic information, but the reality is, that the forensic interview room is a classroom, and children are teachers, and our coworkers are teachers.

Christina Rouse: The National Children's Advocacy Center located in Huntsville, Alabama, or N C A C, as it's known to a lot of folks in the field, has been training professionals for so many years, more than 200. Thousand child abuse professionals from all over the R 50 states and more than 170 countries have been trained by N C A C since 1985.

So during this episode, I am joined by not one, not two. But three of the longstanding trainers with N C A C and I feel very honored to be able to pick their brains about training forensic interviewers. So welcome, Linda Andra and

Linda Cordisco: Kim. Hello. We're happy to be here. Hi.

Kim Madden: Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to talk about something very important to all of us.

Christina Rouse: Yes. So I know we might have some listeners who are not aware of who you all are and what your roles are with N C A C. So I'd love to have you introduce yourselves and tell everyone a little bit about how long you've been with N C A C and how long you've been a forensic interviewer. we will start with Andra.

Andra Chamberlain: Well, hi, and thank you so much. As Christina said, my name is Andra Chamberlain. I am a child forensic interview specialist, and Will is the trainer here at the NT A c I've been with this organization, this family since 2010, and originally came from the C a c in Texas. But I have been interviewing since 1996 in training since 2000.

Christina Rouse: Great. Fantastic. And Kim, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Kim Madden: Yeah, so like Andra, I'm a child forensic interview specialist, a trainer. I am just starting my ninth year here as a trainer in Huntsville. I have been a forensic interviewer working in other capacities within children's advocacy centers for the last 28

Christina Rouse: years.

Wow. I can't wait until we're finished with all the introductions so we can hear the cumulative amount of years that you all have been in the field because it's so

very impressive. So, Kim, I'm so glad you're joining us. And Linda go ahead and introduce

Linda Cordisco: yourself. So I am Linda Cordasco Steel and I am the director of forensic interviewing, training and services.

I also, conduct forensic interviews here. I'm one of the child interview specialists and, as well as overseeing the work of the interviewers and overseeing our training programs. And I do training on forensic interviewing, so I've been in. Interviewer since 1993. so that will be 30 years this year.

And I have, Been with N C A C since 1999. Mm-hmm. So I actually was recruited to come here when we first began training on forensic interviewing. So this has been a long journey and it was so wonderful to get my co-train and fellow travelers join the team. It's definitely something to do together.

Christina Rouse: Yeah. And just for the mere fact of how many years you all have been with N C A C I know a lot of other centers are very jealous at the retention you all have held in the field of forensic interviewing. And if this were a podcast episode on. Retention, I'm sure we would love to hear the secret recipe that you all hold to stay in the work.

but we're gonna actually talk about training new forensic interviewers and as you all mentioned, you have so many years of experience training interviewers I know we're gonna have really good, rich conversation. But before we get into that, Topic and specifically our topic, talking about the new N C A C pathways model.

Because you all have trained so many interviewers, can you tell on day one when someone walks into your interviewing course, if they're gonna be a good interviewer or not? I think there's so many folks who wanna know if you can tell if someone's gonna be a good interviewer. And Andra, I see you laughing.

So tell me your thoughts about that.

Andra Chamberlain: I wish I think the truth is that when someone comes to a basic forensic interview training of any protocol and they don't have much experience in the field, some people come, maybe they've been an advocate or a therapist, law enforcement officer, but when they come to the training and they have this background, it's still fairly overwhelming and there's, so many nuances and I think all of us as trainers, One of the key points that we keep going back to is the longer that we interview, the longer that we train, the more we

understand how incredibly nuanced this particular field is, this particular challenge is.

And you can't, you cannot tell that someone is going to be a good interviewer when they come into the door. All you can do is. Really present them and give them an idea of what it's going to take. But I think if you can tell someone has a lifelong love of learning, that they're just soaking up the material, those people are going to make better interviewers because this is, a profession that requires you to constantly be learning.

You're never done. It's never finished. It's never enough, and. If we identify, I think someone who is a lifelong learner that's really engaged and they're wanting to know more information, I have higher hopes for those individuals than others who, when we talk about research, their eyes kind of glaze and that's not something that they're very interested in.

Christina Rouse: Yeah. Kim, when you heard Andra talk about lifelong learners as a quality, what qualities do you feel are good fits for interviewers

Kim Madden: in addition to the lifelong learning? I think to

Andra Chamberlain: have

Linda Cordisco: a. Curiosity

Kim Madden: orientation to the world. And to be open-minded. We certainly have to be very open to children and their experiences.

I think people have a lot of multiple paths they come to, into the field of forensic interviewing.

Andra Chamberlain: So I

Kim Madden: think looking for. Some experience interacting with children, and this can be in a variety of settings, so Teacher, child, protective worker, a law enforcement officer, school resource officer. But I think a comfort, and an interest.

In children. Those are the things that come to mind. But like Andra, I think in class you can see mm-hmm. Those are the individuals that seem to be taking it in. Maybe not necessarily asking a lot of questions, but really following and showing an interest in, in the

Linda Cordisco: process. So I have a couple of ideas.

I absolutely agree with all of the things that Andra and Kim have said. part of my background, which some people will know and some people won't, is that I was previously a Montessori teacher. And so I know that there are watcher. Learners and they're active learners. Mm-hmm. And that people process new information in really different ways.

So yeah, it's really hard to kind of see from the very beginning. as long as they're engaged and listening and seem to be interested in receiving the material. That's encouraging. But there are just so many styles of learning that it's. Just hard to tell that right away. Mm-hmm. As much as we wish we could.

Christina Rouse: Yeah. I think a lot of c e c directors that having had just hired their first forensic interviewer wish it was as easy as, will it work or will it not work? And we all know that forensic interviewing is very nuanced. both. Based off of the cases and the children in front of us, but also about the individual.

That's the interviewer. And so we have to train our people. you all have been training folks for a very long time, and N C A C has been training professionals for a very long time, and I want us to get into the meat of this new shift that N C A C is working towards on training forensic interviewers.

So Linda, Can you just kick us off and talk a little bit about how the three of you all arrived at deciding that this shift needed to occur in regards to training?

Linda Cordisco: Well, this is something that the three of us have been thinking about and talking about for quite a number of years, so We feel confident.

I mean, it's not like you ever completely arrive, but we feel confident in what we have included in our initial forensic interviewing training, and I think we do a good job initially training new interviewers. I feel that a lot of the other models and protocols also do a good job. What we found is past that initial training the sort of mechanism that had evolved was what we called advanced training.

what does that really mean? and it sort of had evolved to be about lots of different topics, lots of different issues or different kinds of, problems that kids might present with as far as communicating, but what was missing We know that at the end of that initial training, people walk out with a lot of information in their head and they have not integrated that it's not become but heart of their behavior.

Or the way they just proceed when they're interviewing, putting it into practice is so hard. And for those interviewers, those fortunate ones that are going back to A C, A C, where they're gonna have access to good supervision and coaching and ongoing training, that's where that can occur. That really?

Mm-hmm. Integrating that new knowledge, the new behaviors changing how they operate. But many interviewers don't have that luxury. And so we thought there's gotta be a way that as trainers, we can help to. Fill in that gap so that we provide training that really focuses on those essential basic skills and gives another opportunity for interviewers to sort of integrate and deepen, And improve their practice. were you guys hearing things from folks who went through the old model of the trainings? whether they were emailing or calling or just. Asking for more. I think if you're an interviewer and a lifelong learner, we always want more. But were you hearing that from folks who had gone through previous courses?

yes. It was a

Kim Madden: combination of things we were hearing from people who had gone through courses, and one of the things that we often heard was, I know you talked about that in training and it didn't make sense to me at the time, but it got. To my cac and I've done some interviews and now I see what you mean.

And it raises a new set of questions. So it really spoke to this concept that a one week training does not make a forensic interviewer. And to give that basic information. But the reality is, that the forensic interview room is a classroom and children are teachers, and our coworkers are teachers.

and it's a. Process of learning. And again, I think we were talking about that trajectory of skill acquisition. So we heard that consistently. I didn't know what I didn't know. And then I think sometimes we'll hear from supervisors, they realize that they sent a forensic interviewer to training, but there's challenges and they need some more skills.

so those were the two voices that I think

Christina Rouse: that we heard. and Andrea, we talked about there's those basic skills, those core skills, but most of the training trajectory to use Kim's word, has been you get the basic one week and then you're trying to gain these advanced, really somewhat convoluted skills on, children with real special needs or child sexual exploitation cases, or really advanced.

Kind of ace criteria, but there was a, I think a gap that you guys were seeing between the very basic and the very skilled. Tell a little bit about

Andra Chamberlain: that gap. I think what we were seeing, and certainly as Linda said, we kiln and Linda and I have been having these discussions several years. There has been this belief within the field is that you go to a protocol training and then you go home, you conduct interview, and then Evelyn said you go to an advanced training that is more topic specific.

And the belief was that an advanced training might be child exploitation, human trafficking children who are witnesses to homicide, just different topics, so to speak. But what we were finding and what we were seeing definitely as we were, reviewing interviews, is that. There was this belief that they have had this basic training and they had really incorporated and knew the basic skills and so that their belief then was, Hey, I need advanced training.

But what we were seeing is that yes, they had been through a critical training. They did not. Have the basic skills and I think that's what we were repeatedly seeing over and over is that when people had gone to a protocol training, as Kim said, it introduces them to these topics, to these ideas, to these, the beliefs of, of how we conduct forensic interviews.

But we were not seeing. That what they were taught in that basic training, we were not seeing that in their interviews. I mean, and there are always some that they get it right from the beginning. but we were seeing other people just really struggled. They couldn't identify question types.

They did not know how to use an open-ended question and. They might have some questions they were taught in their protocol, and then it was just a checklist. And so there was no critical thinking taking place depending on what the child was saying in response to a question. We weren't finding that the interviewers really taking that information and utilizing that information in the next question.

Mm-hmm. So there was just this belief that. Once you had a basic training, you had all the skills that you needed, and then you needed topic training. But in order, and I think what people don't understand is in order to do a really good interview with the child who's witnessed the homicide, or a child who has been trafficked or there's been exploitation, they have to have those basic skills and they have to be such that you don't think about using them.

It's so ingrained in you. It's so. It just is. and what we're seeing is that many people haven't, reached that point. They still need to focus more on just good interviewing skills, not what we would assume and what we've called in the past, those advanced topics.

Linda Cordisco: So one of the things that we set out to do, the three of us really identified Andra, was talking about not having the basic skills. So it's a matter of identifying what are those basic skills, and we identified three that we thought were really the basics of good interviewing. And one was really skillful use of the continuum of questions.

Really knowing how to not just say, tell me more or ask a yes no question, but how to really listen to the shall and craft that next good question. That encouraged more narrative. So the questioning skills was one. The other basic skill set that we felt was important is social support. Mm-hmm. And there's been, with a revised N I C H D literature, there's been an increased appreciation of really, intune social support provided to the child's gonna look different with different kids.

Mm-hmm. How you read the child, how you provide support in the way this child needs it. So, Questioning skills, social support, and the last is the critical thinking that Andra mentioned. So how do we, prior to the interview and throughout the interview, continue to integrate sort of what we've heard from the child, what we know about the allegations, and make those decisions about what we do next.

And that's where we really started. In terms of these are the basic skills and actually hard interviews are just a better use of those basic skills. Mm-hmm. A trafficking interview is not really a different kind of interview, but it's using those skills in a more nuanced way.

Christina Rouse: And for those who might not be familiar with the term social support, what would be an example of an interviewer having identified that basic skill of social support?

What would they do in an interview?

Linda Cordisco: Well, I think it's, some of it's non-verbal and some of it's verbal. So it is engaging with a child in a way that communicates from the beginning. I'm here to listen to you. some amount of attention to their comfort, where they wanna sit, do they need some water, those kinds of things.

if we notice reluctance, maybe doing some things to address that. So tell me how you're feeling about being here and inviting the child, to talk about their feelings and being respectful of that. It's also really watching the child because kids show us non-verbally even before they start to verbalize, Reluctance or anxiety or I'm getting overwhelmed. And then having a strategy, having a really, a group of strategies that could be tailored to supporting this child. We worried for so many years about. don't appear too friendly or don't talk about feelings. Be objective, be neutral, but you can be neutral about the information from the child, but still be supportive of the child and helping interviewers learn how to do that in a way that's appropriate for the interview.

Kim Madden: just to add to what Linda is saying, there are a lot of. Means of social support, verbal and non-verbal. And for any of our listeners that are interested in the research that may be behind that, you can go to Callo. there is a social support bibliography that Muriel Wells has developed and just look for a lot of the research as well by Michael Lamb and his group.

They have. Devoted, I would say the last 10 years, not exclusively, but have put a lot of energy into time into really looking at what constitutes forensically appropriate social support. So if you are out there thinking, I wanna do this, but my prosecutor isn't a fan, there is a lot of good empirical support for this shift.

And I agree with Linda. It's a very

Christina Rouse: welcome shift. Yeah. I'm just thinking about all of the new interviewers that are just now coming into the field of how robust this new approach to training is gonna be for them. Having been an interviewer, Linda, you originally trained me 15 years ago, back then I think, and the pendulum has kind of swung back in the direction. I think we're hoping it, goes for training interviewers, was that you were so scared coming out of that first training that you are gonna mess everything up and it almost makes you feel. That you don't have the permission to be the human that you wanna be.

And so I'm so excited for this to be opportunities for interviewers to hone that skill that a lot of interviewers were fearful of even approaching. Do you see that fear still in some of the interviewers you all train?

Linda Cordisco: You

Andra Chamberlain: know what I think we're hearing is that. It's not just the new interviewers.

Even some of the more tenured interviewers, dependent on oftentimes prosecution, they may be really uncomfortable with asking, what are your thoughts? How are you feeling? are you doing today? Just again, those, What the research says we can now do in an interview. but occasionally we will run into more tenured interviewers that are working in jurisdictions for perhaps that information hasn't gotten to the prosecutors.

Mm. And so they're still. Coming back to us and saying, I can't do that. I can't say something like that. My team really gets unhappy with me if I ask about what or feelings because there is this worry that it will and somehow bias the interview and that the child, because a person was human with him in the interview, that it.

made them more suggestible or they were going to say things that they wouldn't have said otherwise. So I think in a way, the newer interviewers, because they're getting this from the beginning, are like, oh, okay, this is what we do. But to me, it's often, again, some of the interviewers that are still working with.

Team members that haven't had that training or that knowledge has not been passed to them in a way that they can understand the shift in what we're doing in the

Linda Cordisco: forensic interview. I think it also brings up another issue that kind of fed into this, is those newer interviewers, as Andra was saying, they get this new information, they get this empowerment, they get this suggestion and demonstration of how to do this, and then they go back home.

And if there are those. Older interviewers, not necessarily old in age, but been around doing it this way, or team members, then they actively get messages that, no, that's wrong. That's not okay. This is how it should be done, and they're stranded. As a newer interviewer, it's very hard for them to stand up for.

What they just learned that makes sense to them if they're getting contradictory back at home.

Christina Rouse: Yeah, I love that. I love that, bringing this new approach to training of interviewers is not just for. Our brand new interviewers. And so when you think about that, let's be real.

Change is hard for lots of folks. And so Kim, what would the pitch be for those tenured interviewers who see this new Pathways approach and think, oh, I don't

necessarily need that. I've been around for a long time. What would you tell those tenured interviewers? Well, I

Linda Cordisco: think that

Kim Madden: we could ask them to think about, challenges.

they all do have challenges and. Again, invite them to keep an open mind. hopefully if they're tenured, interviewers, they have also made a commitment to following the research, and the research also speaks pretty clearly to this model that we're talking about. It was, Michael Lamb wrote an article back in 2016 and it was, you can lead.

Horses to water that adage And just to remind them and my hope is if they have remained in the field or tenured interviewers, this is something that they know intuitively.

Christina Rouse: I love that. I love that. Maybe if anything out of this episode, we can, excite all interviewers mm-hmm.

To wanna take advantage of these new. Modalities that are now being offered that just weren't available before, and I love that. Okay. So we've, hinted at the word pathways. We've said it a couple times. Some folks might be curious of what does that even mean? So let's talk about pathways. Let's just talk about the word pathways.

How did you all arrive at deciding that pathways was the right thing, the right term to use to call this new approach to training?

Linda Cordisco: I have to say, it's always a risk when you choose to label any change something.

you've gotta have a label for it. And, I've been around long enough to have lived through where even N C A C. Labeled something one way, forensic evaluation being an example of that, and then said, whoops, wish we hadn't called it that. So that may still happen with Pathways, but the idea was that we, take some of the different kinds of training we thought would be helpful, informative, supportive.

For interviewers and that we divided them into sort of categories, kind of like boxes I guess you would say. And then within each of those categories my imagining was. There's like a pathway here. So we've been talking a lot about

skill development and that one of the pathways and we really started there because we think it's a very important, series of trainings and ways to.

Add to your thinking and practice around all of those skills. But there are other things that are important, those kind of specific kind of trainings about different kind of cases like neglect or witness to homicide or exploitation that could be another kind of a pathway of different trainings that might happen.

Another that I think is so important his supervision. if we wanna be a profession, we've got to begin to develop a mechanism for how interviewers don't just get trained, but they get mentored, they get coached, they get supervised so that they individually can Acknowledge the things they're good at and work on the things where they need to get stronger. So we imagined a pathway around that. And then the last one is the interacting with the team, with the multidisciplinary partners. Learning about that, learning about case law, testifying for those interviewers that testify.

So we saw. The box didn't seem to quite work for us, but the idea that there could be a pathway of trainings sequential, perhaps at least recommended. That's kind of how there could be other names, and I'm open to suggestions, but that's what we've gone with.

Christina Rouse: and I love that you're calling 'em Pathways, but it's really beyond the basics, right?

Yes. Really getting people to think beyond that initial core training, and giving them the permission to think about all of those other nuances, which I think will empower interviewers that yes, they need to be skilled to interview the child in the room. In that moment, but they also didn't be skilled in all of these other areas in order to be a well-rounded interviewer.

So Andra, tell us a little bit about some of the curriculum components of beyond the Basics. What are you guys hoping to focus on there?

Andra Chamberlain: one of the offerings that we have is really looking at taking those questioning strategies and taking those to the next level. And that it literally beyond the basic forensic interviewing, increasing the skills again, because it's when someone goes through a protocol training, we spend.

Maybe six, seven hours on different questions. I had a question, types of questions, but it's really taking that to the next level on doing a much, much deeper dive into what's appropriate, questioning strategies, and then again, what

we've been talking about appropriate, an ongoing social support, throughout the interview.

So that's one. Of the pathways that we're looking at. That's one of the trainings, and it's very similar to. An online training that we had offered in partnership with Griff University. And what we were hearing from those participants is how beneficial, I mean, even tenured interviewers were saying, I'm learning things that I didn't know or that I had forgotten.

So we're taking that concept and we've developed a three day training around just building, on those basic. Skills. within that Linda is conducting a training on, that critical thinking piece because I think that's one of the things that we were seeing with the interviewers is, They would just get stuck sometimes.

They didn't know where to go or how to follow the child or what was the next, question? It was, they didn't have the ability to really think about where do I go from here? And so Linda is conducting a training with that Im is going to be conducting a training on reluctant children and what we had found, Originally, and for years we had a small piece in our basic training on reluctance, but as we were talking and brainstorming, we understood that we're talking about reluctant children and these people don't have a frame of reference.

they just don't understand what we're saying or the challenges that they're going to run into. And so it was decided that once they leave a basic training, they go and they practice. Hopefully they conduct interviews. Then they would have a frame of reference. So Kim's going to be conducting, I think a three day training and just conducting a much deeper dive about what drives reluctance and what does that mean?

How does that present in the interview? Because there's so many different reasons for children that are tentative or reluct and how to try to move that child past that. So that, just some of the trainings that we have and. Kim and Linda May want to add in some of the other trainings that they're doing as well.

Linda Cordisco: Andra used the word deeper dive. I think that's really what we're going for. All of these things are important, and we were aware that in the initial training we hit on all of those topics. Mm-hmm. And in our standard way of doing advanced training, we may hit on some of those topics, but it was fairly superficial and so we felt like, yeah, we're telling some things about it or maybe showing, but are we doing enough to help people really consider, I mean, reluctance is a great example.

There are so many factors that may contribute to a child being reluctant. Done. And it shows up different ways and it shows up at different times. so these trainings hopefully provide an opportunity to really, as Andra said, dive deeply into this particular skill or this particular issue.

Kim Madden: And I would also add, we're really not considering like reluctance so much in isolation. And this is where we had a recent discussion that really some of these pathways are intersecting, like there is a strong need. For critical thinking. When we're interviewing reluctant children, there's a lot of work that we can do interacting with our investigative teams, both before an interview with a reluctant child predicting that reluctance.

Afterwards, how we process through that interview, and then even some of the team decision making, our case review. So we're seeing that, again, some intersectionality and it's, exciting. a work in progress, but I really think we're on the right track.

Christina Rouse: Yeah, you just mentioned it Kim and Linda, you mentioned it a little bit already, that interaction with your team.

So Kim, do you wanna expand on just how paramount that relationship is between the interviewer and the team members when working basic cases or even some of these nuanced cases? you are in

Kim Madden: the interview room, but you're not the only mind and brain that is attending to that child.

And, being able to have those relationships where you can share information, respect the perspective that other individuals, members of your team are bringing, and also recognize the things that they are needing. It really, I think, can help in those three different stages that I was talking about before an interview.

How we're thinking about this in the reluctance training. We put a lot of emphasis on discussing with your team how you predict reluctance. What might that mean? What are some of the sources. What are some of the strategies that we can do in this interview to be able to effectively transition that child?

And I think when we take the time to involve our investigative team, it gives them more of an ownership in the process. Mm-hmm. I think it can make them more attentive. It certainly is a great. Avenue to talk about some dynamics that maybe they may not have been familiar with. And then looking at when we

check with our team, When the interview's almost over that check-in process, that is helpful.

Again, if you've had that dialogue and that discussion. And back to the team case review, how are we talking about these decisions? What is it that this child may need if we've some significant barriers with a reluctant child? What might we be able to do as a team to mitigate or remove some of those barriers, to put that child in a place where maybe they feel more comfortable divulging details about things that have happened to them.

So it's ongoing and I think it's, of the strong pillars that we need as we do this work.

Christina Rouse: which course are you the most excited about Kim?

Kim Madden: That's a really tough question.

I'm excited about the ones that I have been developing, the reluctance that Andra and Linda spoke about. we are also working on a preschool. Looking at some of those same sorts of issues, but I would say the one that I'm most excited about is the one that Andra is currently working on, because it is this concrete deep dive into question types and really.

dissecting those question types and thinking about their use in a forensic interview, and then the parallel social support. To me, those are just going to be very, very helpful tools to put in the hands of interviewers that I think have the great potential to advance work in the way that we're hoping to see.

And advanced work of forensic interviews will only benefit children.

Christina Rouse: All right. I'm gonna ask the same question to both Andra and Linda. Andra, which course, out of the beyond the basics are you the most excited for?

Andra Chamberlain: I am excited about looking at the question types and the social support, because I think that there's such a need.

Mm-hmm. Have the opportunity to see that need over and over again as, we observe interviews, talk with interviewers. But I'm also excited about the one that Linda is doing about the critical thinking. Mm-hmm. again, we, we talk about how nuance this profession is, and the skills that are needed.

And we see people that interact with children, they're very comfortable with children. they understand that basic forensic interview process, again, no matter what protocol that they utilize, but sometimes they just, don't know what to do when they get in the interview room and maybe the child's reluctant or it's a preschooler and they don't.

Understand how to work their way through whatever issue is presenting in the moment. And so, we've spent quite a bit of time thinking about, but how do you teach someone critical thinking? Mm And what that involves, but. I feel like that that is very definitely a, key piece to what we're offering with the Pathways is helping people develop those skills so that they do a better job in the interview and in one, making the child comfortable gathering that information that's needed for our team members.

it's not an easy job. Mm-hmm. And I think that when you really focus on how do we do this better, that I'm excited about what the potential is for that and the growth of forensic interviewers. I love the opening up of that critical thinking because it is more than just.

Christina Rouse: Asking questions in an interview room, and I love that this Pathways model is giving that approach to opening up that a little more than what historically was there. So Linda, I think I know what your favorite one might be, but tell us which one you're the most excited about.

Linda Cordisco: Well, I love them all.

Mm-hmm. And I do think we're finding that, even though we're focusing on, one particular, whether it's critical thinking or social support or better questions or reluctance, that pieces of all of the trainings also folds back into that. But I think the thing that I am most passionate about is supervision.

Mm-hmm. That's what I thought. I have a background as a clinical supervisor and have always sort of taken that approach with the interviewers that I work with, and when you mentioned earlier, About the retention How do we keep people? I think all of the skills based stuff is important because when we feel good and we feel competent in what we're doing, we're more likely to stick around doing a job.

But the other thing I think we're not. providing to new interviewers, and we have two newer staff. An interviewer and a new advocate slash therapist here in the children's building is the encounter they have with people come into this

field, if they're passionate about children and children being safe and children being healthy.

They wanna help. Mm-hmm. They wanna help kids have a better life. And that encounter with the limited resources often that are available out there and the limitations from our partners, from our child protection and law enforcement, and what courts can do and encounter kids and families with. Multiple needs in addition to the allegation that we're actually interviewing them about.

And so I think that supportive supervision that helps them work through that process. And when there are conflicts, I mean, hopefully we try to avoid them, but when there are conflicts with partners, with team, partners, cases go to trial, you testify you don't get a guilty verdict. I just think there also are supervision needs that.

Beyond just telling war stories. yeah. About really helping interviewers, learn how to live inside of this role. and so I think that's important, CACs are busy places. There's limited resources. I understand it's a challenge, but we're not gonna get longevity, I don't think, without some of that.

Christina Rouse: So all of the courses you guys mentioned in the curriculum for Beyond the Basics is on the national cac.org website. I'm looking at it right now, and it looks like you all are gonna be very busy in the upcoming months. The dates and registrations are open and available for folks to find, so I'm super excited about this opportunity for interviewers both new.

And tenured. So to wrap up our conversations about pathways and beyond the basics, what are you all hopeful that this will do in the sense of the elevating of the field, of forensic interviewing? And I'll, start with Kim. I

Kim Madden: think we're hopeful for a number of things. again, speaking to the multiple pathways, I'm very hopeful that this is going to elevate practice, helping to establish forensic interviewing as a career and.

Also inform

Andra Chamberlain: supervisor, c a c, the

Kim Madden: larger world about the need for a commitment of time and resources to developing these necessary skills. Mm-hmm. And to look as Linda was talking about, for that key important role of that supportive supervision. So

I hope this reaches the far corners of the 950 something CACs in the United States and across the world.

Pretty

Christina Rouse: lofty goal, No, I think it's a great place to start to get there, for sure. Linda, what are you hoping that the beyond the basics does for interviewers? I think,

Linda Cordisco: I'm hoping, sort of similar to what Kim said, that it brings into the sunlight, I guess you would say. the real challenges about real excellence in forensic interviewing how complex it is and that we struggle with not.

always being recognized as a professional identity. I think that's important for us to have that and I hope that we can offer to the field a way that people can begin to think about, not only how am I gonna hire my interviewer and get them trained in that initial protocol training, but how am I gonna support them, sustain them, support that lifelong learning.

And just increase awareness, increase commitment. I

Christina Rouse: love it. All right, Andra what are your thoughts? I see your, dreams and hopes in the sparkle in your eye, but let us know what you're thinking this will do. Uh, well, I'm just

Andra Chamberlain: gonna echo Kim and Linda because my hope is that executive directors, program directors, supervisors, Will understand that because this is such a complex endeavor that they give their interviewers not only the time to attend that, very basic protocol training, but that they understand the need to continue to give time for their interviewers to, Not just a 10 peer review, but hopefully have that supervision or if they're in an agency where they don't have that more tenured supervisor, that they can participate in a mentoring program if they have something in their state or their agency.

But I think One of the challenges that we hear over and over again when I'm talking to interviewers, whether they're new or tenured, and we say, well, one of the best things you can do is watch one of your own interviews, transcribe it, look at your question types, look at the types of, social support that you're offering that they don't have the time to do that.

And they're not given the time to do that. And my hope is the PO people that are in the positions of making decisions for their interviewers, that they will

understand that it's equally important that they have to be given time to further develop their skills. And if they don't, it's going to be not only challenging for the interviewer, but it can be devastating for the child.

Christina Rouse: Yeah. I love that you lifted that, Andrea, because for so long interviewers, lifelong interviewers have advocated very strongly for themselves on what they needed to grow and develop. And I too would love to see the shift in the culture of interviewing be where c a c directors and supervisors are giving space and time and resources to interviewers to allow them.

To enhance and elevate their skills more than just conducting interviews, we need to be able to do more than that. So this has been a fantastic conversation. I think our listeners are gonna get a lot of rich information and questions answered about pathways and what's being offered now in the field from N C A C.

I wanna end on a quote, Linda, that you had put in one of your blogs. About pathways that we'll list in our show notes as a resource for people to read, cuz they're fantastic. And I think we've hit this message home pretty strongly, but I'll we'll end on it, that it's just not possible to rewire our brains and change longstanding habits through a one week, one-off course of instruction.

And so I wanna thank all three of you for joining me and we'll continue to change the

Linda Cordisco: field. I wanna thank you also. It's been an absolute delight to spend a whole hour engaging in thinking about this, and I appreciate to all of you who may be listening to this podcast and don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have further questions.

Andra Chamberlain: And also just again, our thanks to S R C A C and what they offer to the field of forensic interviewing, as well as to children's advocacy centers, not only in the southern region, but across the United States. But yes, I'm gonna second Linda, if you have any questions, please reach out. our job, our goal, our desire is to be here for you and to answer any questions that you may have.

And if we dunno the answer, we will find someone who does.

Linda Cordisco: Yes, and thank you again,

Christina, s r c a c, and a big, big thank you to all of you, especially those forensic interviewers that are listening there. Thank you so much for dedicating your career as of right now to this profession and for the time that you spend in those interview rooms with those children, listening to those stories and hoping to move things in a better direction.