

[00:00:00] **Christina Rouse:** The relationship between learner and teacher is a dance. There needs to be coordination and communication and so many other things which are necessary for success. And who better to help me have this discussion than these two fantastic teachers, Kelly Boger and Lydia Johnson-Grady,

[00:00:18] **Kelly Bober:** thank you

[00:00:20] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** for having us today.

But it's so great to be here.

[00:00:23] **Christina Rouse:** Yeah, I'm so excited for our conversation. You both are nothing short of mentoring mavericks, bringing guidance and wisdom to aspiring interviewers, and I'm allowed to say that because you both have helped mentor me and super advise me throughout my interviewing career. So I'm happy that you're here.

But for our listeners who might not be familiar with you, Kelly, why don't you introduce yourself and tell us a little bit more about you.

[00:00:47] **Kelly Bober:** My name's Kelly Bober. I am the executive director of the Child Safe Center, which is a small C A C in Winchester, Virginia. I've been here for just over 15 years.

And before coming here, I was the lead interviewer at Children's Hospital, the King's Daughters. I have trained in multiple models and my claim to fame is being the very first employed forensic interviewer in the state of Virginia. I've been doing it for over 25 years now.

[00:01:19] **Christina Rouse:** Yeah. That's fantastic.

And we're gonna get more into your history in the state of Virginia in a little bit. So thanks for being here. And Lydia, why don't you also tell us a little more about

[00:01:30] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** yourself. Sure. So I'm currently a program manager for M D T Development with the Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center. Means I get to work really closely with Christina which I'm really enjoying, but I've also been a forensic interviewer for about 15 years.

So just prior to coming to Southern Regional, actually did. Forensic interview on like my last day before coming here, even though that wasn't fully my role at the time, but I've had as many people have in the CAC world, a lot of different hats within a couple of different, also small, pretty rural mountain community CACs in West Virginia.

And there I was a forensic interviewer. I was an executive director. I've also been an M D T facilitator, victim advocate. Done a lot of the different jobs at our house within the C a c, but always carrying that thread of loving learning about and doing forensic interviews with kids. And then most recently, I think where I really dug deep into the research and connecting to that teaching part of it was as a facilitator for West Virginia's state chapter West Virginia child advocacy networks.

Statewide peer review. So I was helpful in establishing that, the virtual version of it, and then facilitating it for a handful of years prior to the virtual version. I also facilitated a lot of peer review on the local and regional level. And then I was working as a contractor, so contracting directly with a couple of different CACs within West Virginia to provide clinical supervision and mentoring that looked different for each setting.

But for forensic interviewers working on the front lines. Yeah, and

[00:03:09] **Christina Rouse:** I love Lydia what you said about interviewers being lifelong learners. And we all have that passion to ensure that new interviewers coming up into the field have, successful resources or access to folks to help guide and nurture them throughout their career.

Cuz being an interviewer is very difficult. So today we're gonna talk about mentorship and supervision of forensic interviewers, and we're gonna get right down to it and just start us off with talking about the difference between these two things. I think a lot of times mentorship and supervision sometimes are used synonymously with one another in our field.

But as we get into our conversation, what I am hopeful for is that our listeners will see that mentorship supervision are very distinct, different things. So when you think about. Mentorship and supervision, what do those things mean to you? Do you think they're the same? How are they different? I'd love to get your thoughts on this.

[00:04:08] **Kelly Bober:** Well, one of the major things that stands out to me when I'm thinking of the two is you can be a supervisor who is not trained in

interviewing. When I think about supervision, I'm thinking more about the person responsible for onboarding, somebody doing quality assurance maybe being involved with the day-to-day pieces of what they do, who may or may not be familiar with forensic interviewing.

When I think of mentoring, I'm thinking of somebody who is generally someone that person respects highly and has a lot of experience and maybe can offer some guidance, but without the repercussions of worrying about are my failures or my shortcomings or my learning curve going to be held against me the way it may be with the supervisor?

[00:05:00] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** For me I like to think of it similarly to how Kelly was talking about as it being two distinct roles, but I do think one person can potentially be both of those things. And when that happens, I think it can be a real benefit if you have, not a lot of staff or you're in an isolated area if you have someone who can do both those things.

But it could also be tricky and I think that's where the communication piece comes in to be really clear on when am I being a teacher and when am I being more of a manager? And that's something I see as a distinction. However, I think it's really important to recognize that both are support roles or should be.

Mm-hmm. Right. A good supervisor is a supportive supervisor and a good mentor absolutely needs to be supportive as well. I agree.

[00:05:45] **Kelly Bober:** I would like to think that I'm both, because I have been doing it for a long time and as the executive director of my agency, of course I'm directly supervising interviewers who fall under me.

But I can see where especially in my position, I can see how there are times when I have to change hats.

[00:06:03] **Christina Rouse:** Lydia, you're right, the mentor can be the same person as the supervisor if that person is a trained interviewer. Right. Because I think supervision is to those things that Kelly was talking about, those tactical task performing skills.

Interviewers still need supervision on our task performing skills inside the interview room. But the mentorship is also that more of the holistic perspective of the interviewer, that long-term development of who they are as a person. And so sometimes that could be the same person. Sometimes it necessarily needs to be separate

[00:06:40] **Kelly Bober:** people.

[00:06:41] **Christina Rouse:** So when we think about knowing that both our support roles and interviewers cannot do this work without having that person I'd love to hear

[00:06:52] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** how the evolution

[00:06:54] **Christina Rouse:** that you all had as interviewers came to be. Kelly, you mentioned that you were the first interviewer in Virginia. So who were your mentors?

Who were your supervisors?

[00:07:03] **Kelly Bober:** How did you navigate that? Oh, it was a challenge. When I started out the field was still new as well, so a lot of things that we did back then we would never do now because I didn't have anyone else that I could look to that was doing forensic interviewing in my area.

I relied heavily on clinical practitioners. Psychologists and lcs ws and really didn't know enough even then to realize that there were some things that were not applicable between the two. So I, would say if I, reflect on my career, things that I did early on when I did not have a lot of information and the field was new, we didn't have a lot of research, there were a lot of mistakes made, and there were probably I would say years that I was floundering and learning and really had to push myself to get surrounded by and seek expertise outside of the state.

A lot of reading, a lot of growing with the profession as a profession grew. What were some of the qualities of the people that you did find? That helped mentor you or develop you as you were navigating interviewer? What did those characteristics, so to speak, that you found helpful in those people?

Patience and a willingness to listen and learn alongside me because they were not interviewers either. because I was really relying heavily on clinicians helping point out and having them be open to understanding the differences so that there wasn't an immediate shutdown of, no, we don't do this.

that was very helpful to me. Lydia what about you? Who were some of your mentors and supervisors when you were starting out?

[00:08:45] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** Well, I was just dying to answer this question, so I'm glad you asked it because Kelly was my first and most significant mentor for forensic interviewing. I don't know Kelly, if you knew that at the time or remember it now, but Kelly was an amazing mentor.

I think one of her real gifts which taught me, you know, I took that lesson with me as I was helping new people, is to recognize the moment and what needs to be said in the moment. And what I mean by that is she might say something, be very careful about what she says in front of other people and who those other people are and what she says to you one-on-one.

Always in a really supportive, gracious, like, you're learning with, I think you just, Kelly, you have a really a high sensitivity to that of like, when's the right time to give this advice or teach this lesson that's gonna help the person knowing that people come with like, sometimes some pretty extreme vulnerability to the interviewing practice.

It's challenging work. You're very much on stage. Every thing you do is being recorded for what feels like forever, so you're open to critique indefinitely based on what you do in all those early interviews and even later interviews, but I think there's a real.

special skill that you can hone. But also some people, it's like a gift that they do naturally to find ways to not ignore the things that need to be improved and fix and the lessons that means to be taught, but recognizing when to teach them and how to develop trust with that person so that when you offer that critical feedback, they know it's coming from a place of really, wanting them to do better.

So Kelly was wonderful at that with me. I think her proximity, cuz although I was in West Virginia, our CACs were only about 25 minutes apart and she was really seen as the expert for us. And she came over and would do training with our team. And those early exposures to Kelly, let me already sort of recognize her as a mentor.

And then we had kind of a weird situation where we were housed in an. In kind donated space that suddenly was taken back from the cac. And so our CAC had no facility. We found office space quickly, but, finding an interview set up, that's a different need to film. That took some more time.

And then that interim Kelly very graciously allowed us to do all of our interviews in her space. And so I was with Kelly multiple times a week during

that first year maybe of interviewing, which that's a critical learning window, so it just sort of coincidentally, the circumstances placed Kelly in my path, me and Kelly's path.

And I got to learn from her and also learn how to teach from her which was very special to me.

[00:11:29] **Kelly Bober:** I appreciate that. And honestly, I think some of my stylistic in terms of teaching and trying to be supportive is really probably shaped. From horrible criticism and attacks on the stand.

Mm-hmm. Which has been humbling and if you've never testified to have your work shredded for you. But it shows you what you would not want supervision to look like or mentoring to look like. So I think that has really influenced me in terms of being sensitive and knowing that that does not feel good.

So I've never wanted the strive to have a feedback that felt. like a cross-examination. Well, I'm gonna bring us full circle because Kelly, you were also one of my first mentors. I'm gonna share a memory and you probably will not remember this, but you were faculty at the Child first course I went through for my first initial FI training, and you were my faculty when we did our mock interviews with our child actors.

[00:12:32] **Christina Rouse:** And I had the kid, and you might remember this character from our child first, who was the over energized, hyperactive, five-year-old character. And you could hear this child like in the hallway acting before you would bring him in. So I was already terrified that this was the kid I was having to interview.

and the reason I'm telling this story is because as a mentor, You had so much power on how you were going to react to how I was interviewing, that I think would've swayed me one way or the other on whether I felt like I could do this job. So I did my mock. And you were very supportive.

You were very strength-based. You were really kind. Whereas mentors have a tendency sometimes to want to mold people into who they are, And make people want to interview just like them or identical to how they do it. And you just were very open with your feedback to me, and I just was like, oh, she's really cool and very supportive.

And so that was such a pivotal moment for me to have that support so early on in my career that I think if you are supervising or mentoring, it's something to consider of like the impressions we make on people are so powerful.

[00:13:54] **Kelly Bober:** I wish I had the opportunity to have that, because I do think there were many years that I floundered and there were many things that I produced that I'm not proud of in terms of like interview quality and practices and we were all learning.

So I'm gracious to myself to know that, as a field we were growing and learning. Mm-hmm. I would say if I could expedite having somebody's comfort, that would've been helpful. I really feel like the first 100 interviews that I did were a whirlwind and probably were nothing that I would be proud of.

It took me a hundred interviews under my feet, and that was with no supervision or mentor. Well, supervision, but no mentoring. So I would like to think that as a field that as we offer it, that it doesn't take people nowadays, 100 interviews to feel like they're competent.

[00:14:44] **Christina Rouse:** Yeah, I think we're gonna get into that as we dive deeper into our conversation, that it's almost if mentorship and or supervision is possible, that it's a mandatory element of our learning and training versus a luxury of us being able to do so.

What are you guys seeing right now in the field as it relates to mentorship and supervision? Whether that's things that you're encountering at your centers or things that you're hearing from folks who are currently interviewing.

[00:15:11] **Kelly Bober:** This is actually very timely for me. We in Virginia had a director's retreat on Friday, just a few days ago.

And one of the topics was the onboarding process for forensic interviewers. so all of the directors who were there, and you have a range of sizes from those that are very urban to very small one-man shops at CACs. Talking about what it could look like. And what I've noticed is that the larger urban centers that have more staff and more availability and resources tend to have a stronger plan generally.

Mm-hmm. And more time and support for their new people. I think it's more of a challenge for the smaller jurisdictions where it's like, oh, you want the child first last week? Okay, here's your first interview this week. Go for it, knock it

out. And maybe as a state in Virginia and maybe as a field across the country, that's probably something that happens often.

It would be nice if we can find a way to level that playing field so that even the smallest of the smallest CACs have the opportunity to provide some real support to the interviewers when they're starting. And it's not just a, oh, you've went to training last week. Here you go. Here's your first one.

[00:16:29] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** I think what I have been seeing as a trend is a growing, like, rapidly growing, really ramping up recognition that we need to do this, this is a need. Mm-hmm. I do feel like I'm seeing and hearing a shift from like you described, I think Christina, about like something being a luxury, or maybe we should Kelly about it being a luxury to being.

This is necessary for us to have high quality work and hopefully some more longevity because we know that turnover is an issue. we have the art and science know-how to do this work well, and recognizing that lack of support and the professional development pieces for those folks as they're doing the work firsthand that that could be a piece that could change things.

So I'm hearing people say, yeah, we want this and where we're getting stuck, or a lot of people are feeling stuck, particularly in those smaller centers or where they don't have the expertise in-house on staff, which could be true even at a larger center mm-hmm. is how are we gonna do it? How are we gonna access it?

Who are the people who can be mentors? What programs already exist? And if there isn't one, how can we develop one? Which I think is a really exciting place for us to be as a field.

[00:17:42] **Kelly Bober:** I think that, and also, Protecting the time to allow that to happen. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Which I think is another thing that when people who are in a managing position, maybe they're not interviewers or maybe they are looking at agency productivity, that if something has to be cut, sometimes unfortunately those things that are cut or eliminated are those things that are really going to provide that interviewer with.

And not just interviewers. I'm sure mental health probably has the same, but providing that employee with the opportunity to develop their skills and to get support and to learn more. So, finding that balance between the managerial, lens of looking at productivity, and then the mentoring and the research lens of how

can we improve and invest in this person and keep them, keep their skills up and give them what they need to thrive.

[00:18:38] **Christina Rouse:** And I think in the c a C world, that's very difficult because we are very client service focused. And so productivity does equate to serving children and families. And a lot of times if it is a person in that managerial or c o o r c e o position or ED position, that's what they wanna see. They wanna see that quantitative, how many children and families have we served?

And carving that time and space for that development piece is something that you can't immediately measure. These are like things that we're providing that we'll see long-term in our staff. But not being able to see that end of the day measurement of that time and space. I think it's hard for people to have that mindset around.

[00:19:29] **Kelly Bober:** I have an ugly story to share related to this and I know we've come really far since then, but there was a time when one of the agencies that I worked at basically had expanded beyond our capability. We didn't have enough staff. And so one of the pushes were to try to schedule as many interviews as we could in a week so that children weren't waiting two or three weeks to have an interview.

And at that time my quota, I'll say it was a quota, was to do 15 interviews a week. And because we were seeing kids so far out we had a high no-show rate. So I was offering 15 slots a week, and maybe 12 of them would come in. So my productivity would show 12. And the manager, the supervisor of me at that time was very displeased, that I was only seeing 12 children a week knowing that we had this wait list.

And so one of the things that they came up with was to remove me off of all other duties, like remove me from m d T meetings, remove me from doing peer review or training, and had me schedule 22 interviews a week knowing that some of them would be no show and hope that at the end of the week that 22 would actually realize 15.

Mm-hmm. And so I think about that and the thought of scheduling for a person, 22 interviews in a week, and there were weeks in that materialized, and I had 22 interviews in those weeks. But I don't know that anybody, and I hope that nobody in the field is now taking that type of stance. I think it's a question that a lot of centers are asking themselves, and Lydia can attest to this at Southern Region, we get these TA requests all the time of, help me explain to my

manager or my director or my supervisors what number I need to tell 'em I'm gonna do in a week. And there is no right answer, but I think sometimes policies are put into place or programs are changed in a matter that could have unintended consequences of, yes, Kelly, you were seeing more clients in a week, but at the detriment of what, So where was that balance

there? And I think when you overburden and some of it is self-imposed because we as interviewers. We wanna help every child, and we feel every child needs and deserves to be interviewed by somebody who's competent and qualified.

And so we have a hard time as a field saying no. So some of it is self-inflicted, but it's not surprising if we approach it with that mentality. It almost feels like fast food. Mm. When you're doing an interview like that. And I can tell you if I'm being honest and reflective, the quality of the work that I was doing then was poor because it felt very, not child-centered.

It felt very robotic. I was not always 100% present. So I do think that it's a major consideration for somebody who is a supervisor. I think a mentor would get it. A supervisor may not get it. Yeah. So Lydia, you brought it up. You said people are right at that precipice of like knowing they need to do something, but not sure what that looks like.

[00:22:42] **Christina Rouse:** So with us having already defined the difference between mentorship and supervision, what are some of those things that mentorship, what can mentorship look like at a C a C?

[00:22:53] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** Well, I'm excited to see how we collectively answer that question over the next 10 years. And that maybe seemed like a long time, but that feels about right to me.

Like, I think in about 10 years we should do another podcast episode and reflect on what has been developed. But I think it can look like. Setting aside time if you have somebody in-house who has the experience and expertise and time available and is a good teacher. Mm-hmm. Because this is something that I made a note, I definitely wanted to say that when we're thinking about who should be identified and to be in a mentorship role, teaching a skill and having a skill are different.

And people can be excellent at something and not excellent at teaching someone else how to do that very thing. And I think we often substitute years in the field or number of interviews for teaching skill when we're looking at who should be And who would probably enjoy it, right?

Mm-hmm. It would be fruitful and potentially enjoyable for that person. If a person struggles to teach, it's probably gonna be stressful work for them. Rather than like a meaningful continued development for that person who's serving as the mentor as well. So, being a good teacher, which sometimes people know that about themselves and they may be the person on your staff who like volunteers to create a presentation and wants to go do things in the community and help others, or wants to be paired with new staff.

So it might be that you just take a step back and look at who do we have who's already volunteering themselves because they enjoy teaching, but then also listening to the folks. Who are on the receiving end of that because we hear from each other, I mean, even within our in-state networks, we hear about, oh, like this person helped us with this and she's really good at X, Y, Z.

Or, I went to her workshop and she really knows the researcher. If I have a question, This is the person I call. That to me is a good indicator of somebody who's even, like, informally being recognized within a professional network is like, who's the person that everybody calls when they have an interviewing question or if they wanna be directed to some kind of helpful resource.

So I think I identifying who can be a good mentor and if that person's on staff great. Then look at what's on their plate and how can we build in time for them to a, prepare for the mentoring mm-hmm. with that other person. Because if it's gonna be done really well, they probably should have some time to prepare for it.

And that might look like observing interviews in real time at the center and or watching recorded interviews so that when they have the time together, ideally the mentor and the person being mentored come to the table with ideas for what their work together is gonna look like. So, when I'm in a formal mentoring or consultative role, I always wanna know what's that other person hoping to get out of it.

But sometimes people don't really know what they, you know, that, they might have a limited response to that. So it's my responsibility to come to that conversation prepared with ideas as well. And so that's where that prep time is gonna be important for whoever's. Being the mentor in the mentoring role.

So setting aside time for prep, setting aside time for the communication in person, and then whatever practice evolves from that or results from that mentoring session or time together. That sounds really formal. It can happen I think, organically as well, but I think if we don't recognize, and this is

something I didn't have with Kelly when she was my mentor, we didn't have official time set aside.

I was just picking things from her as much as I could whenever I was around her. But, we didn't have that time set aside and I think that's needs to change and is changing. In the field, if you're working with somebody who's not on your staff, which I think this is a separate question that I hope people can get creative about is if it's somebody that you're gonna contract with or who's gonna, maybe a few centers are gonna.

Work together and say regionally we wanna find somebody to be acting as a mentor and what can that look like? How are we gonna potentially compensate either that person or the program they work for? Even if it's swapping something, we could barter, right? But Compensation, whether that's dollars or something else should be part of the conversation.

But if it's somebody that's outside of your center, then I think it kind of feels more natural to formally set aside meeting time and structure it. But we should be thinking of that, whether it's an on staff, in-house person or somebody externally.

[00:27:31] **Kelly Bober:** Yeah, I really appreciate that, that idea because I've been approached and have provided mentorship to a lot of people and it never feels good as the person who is trying to go in to help.

If there's not already something to start with, because, it's very rare that I have free time to just sit and chat with somebody about an interview. So for me to carve out that time then to come and somebody's like, I don't even know what I want to know from you. Sometimes that starting point may be, let's just watch an interview that you've done just so that I know where we're starting.

But it would be really helpful to have that done on the front end before you're meeting with that person so that you can come to the table with something. It's more efficient use of time.

[00:28:15] **Christina Rouse:** So I'm gonna ask you both this question. knowing that when you have that time carved out for mentorship, those should be very purposeful conversations with your mentor and knowing that mentorship is more of the holistic kind of approach and development of the person.

As an interviewer and supervision is more of those task oriented skill development things. What kinds of things should be discussed or conversed or

asked during mentorship that might be a little different than what we see in task oriented supervision?

[00:28:49] **Kelly Bober:** I think one of the things that might be different between supervision and mentorship is if they're looking holistically, somebody may be able to be more honest with a mentor who's not their supervisor, then they would be if I'm working for an agency and you're my direct supervisor, so they may be able to have that conversation about. These types of interviews really upset me. Or this is what I need from my agency that I'm not getting. Or can you help me find a way to broach this? you're telling me this is what's best practice, or I know this is what's best practice, but my agency's not doing it.

How can I bridge that conversation? I think that's a piece of it. Providing a forum for that person who is learning to have a safe place that they can talk about all of the issues, be it their supervision, that they're getting, their agency support, cases that are challenging for them, or skills that are challenging for them, and knowing that that they can bounce ideas off and take that information without fear of, is this going to cost me my job if I say this?

[00:29:56] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** I think this question's a little tricky for me to answer Christina, cuz I wanna believe that I asked all these very sensitive questions when I was also in a supervisory role. And I don't know, you'll have to ask the people I supervised, I guess, if that was true. But so it was hard for me to think that there would be things that would be kind of off limits.

If I were the person's supervisor though, I definitely agree with Kelly that there may be things a person would be more or less comfortable sharing. One thing that I feel like Kelly really modeled for me that I also really try to model for folks regardless of whether I'm mentoring or supervising, but I think it might have more place in the mentor role is from the beginning.

Communicating to that person, they are responsible as a professional doing this work. And so that means they are responsible for making decisions that are informed by their professional judgment, which should be informed by all the things, right? Best practices our own practice guidance, and those of people who have more expertise than us.

The research, all of those things that we should be learning about, we should be leaning on that to help us make decisions. And that might mean that an individual policy is. Needs to be revised, So that's part of being a responsible and engaged professional forensic interviewer is saying, not saying I do this because that's the policy, there may be a policy that was responsive to whatever

the best product test guidance was at the time, or local needs at the time, but your mentor is somebody that you should feel comfortable saying, I don't know what to do. Help me. And hopefully the mentor can say, what do you think about that?

what is what, you know, telling you where can we learn more about this? And that might mean that you end up helping and supporting and coaching that person through the conversations they then wanna have with a person who's more in a managerial or policy making role about how that policy may be negatively impacting the work.

Mm-hmm. So, that is something that I think can happen with some supervisors, but not all, depending on the role and the nature of the relationship.

[00:32:00] **Kelly Bober:** I fully agree. in Virginia, we implemented a forensic interview or peer support network kind of thing where we do training opportunities, but often we just have discussions about forensic interviewing issues or support.

And what I've noticed is that some of the people who participate, and this is across the state we meet monthly, but some of the people who participate will bring to the group an issue that they're facing at their center, that they feel unsupported by their direct supervisor or their leadership.

And they may be the only interviewer in their area. And they're really wanting to use that platform as a way to feel validated and supported and to be able to bring back either research or support to show them these are the things that we think we should change, or things that might be a challenge for us.

So that has been a really successful, and I think that might be a model for some of those jurisdictions that have limited resources or they're very insulated, is implementing some sort of state networking or mentoring type thing like we have done here in Virginia. It's been very well attended and I think very helpful for those interviewers, especially those that are isolated and are operating at an agency where they're probably the only interviewer

[00:33:26] **Christina Rouse:** we talked about what mentorship can look like and knowing that we've attempted to distinguish the two.

Kelly, tell us a little bit about supervision. So supervision at a C A C. What can that look like for centers? And let's consider like those rural, all the way to the urban around supervision.

[00:33:43] **Kelly Bober:** So as a director, I provide supervision to all of my staff, not just my interviewers, my advocates, my therapists.

And one of the things that I do is I block time to meet with them. So there's the formality of this is a standing appointment, it's not a drive by. You're going into the refrigerator and I see you and I just stop and ask. But to have a formal time that's set aside and objectives of what we want to cover, or at least themes of things that we wanna cover so that there's consistent opportunity to talk about those things.

And think as somebody who does mentoring and supervision, mine probably looks like a blending of the two And I think that's just my style, like stylistically, I think that's how I supervise is the same way. But we'll talk about things ranging from. Work performance to caseload, to concerns, to how's your family I think there needs to be the opportunity to let that person know, like, I care about you as a person. If I want people who work for me to give 110%, and I don't expect that a hundred percent while they're here, then I need to show that I'm, equally committed to them and that I care about them, and how can I expect somebody to care about our agency if they don't feel valued.

So I think I would say having a formal, actual set aside and respected and protected time to meet on a regular basis with an agenda of what you are hoping to cover is an important step.

[00:35:20] **Christina Rouse:** Kelly, would you say that there are, times where you get down into like nitty gritty skill development for your interviewers during supervision?

Oh,

[00:35:31] **Kelly Bober:** absolutely. Especially newer interviewers. And that may be an extended meeting with them. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. there's a few different ways that we do our supervision of interviews. Some of it may be real time live where I'm observing an interview. And then later, either that same day or the next day, depending on how much time they need to kind of decompress from that and think about it a chew on it.

We may have a discussion about how that went. I check in with every interviewer after every interview just to see if they're okay and how they felt about the interview. That's not a deep dive. Mm-hmm. The deep dive might come a day or two later. So that's one way we do it the real time. And then the

another way that we do it, especially with somebody who's building a new skill, is we'll do a supervision.

It's, It's like a peer review. It's kind of a combination between a peer review and supervision. The pieces of peer review is that I'm gonna allow them to talk as well and share information, but it's gonna be done on a one-on-one. I'm not gonna bring my other interviewers in when I'm trying to correct somebody's skill or to support them.

But that might look more like a play and pause type of mm-hmm. feedback where we're observing a portion of an interview and then pausing and discussing what made you think to go that way, or what were your other things that you were thinking you might go or have you ever tried this or did you think about this at that moment?

And then continuing and playing on, I think One of, not the shortcomings, but one of the things that happens with a full peer review where you watch the entire interview is that you get the flavor of the entire interview. Mm-hmm. And that's important to get the flavor of the whole interview, but it doesn't give you that second that you made that decision.

And so to do the pause play when you're watching the feedback, it really helps with okay. At that moment you had this road in front of you, you could have gone to the left or to the right and you chose to go this way. what compelled you to go that way?

What was your gut telling you? And catching it real time I think is helpful.

[00:37:34] **Christina Rouse:** Okay. Kelly, you opened the door and I'm gonna jump right through it here. You mentioned peer review. I think the other thing we see a lot in the field is people using. Peer review and supervision synonymously as well.

Where does peer review fit into the supervision realm?

[00:37:54] **Kelly Bober:** I would say it's a tool it's a tool and a task that should fall on that continuum of supervision, but it should not substitute either mentoring or supervision depending on what you're getting from your agency. I'm not sure how you feel about that, Lydia.

[00:38:11] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** I think sometimes peer review gets sort of intense reactions in both directions, So we've heard a lot in recent years about

peer review doesn't change practice, and that's been, the message of some literature that's been published.

And I would say that I. Mostly a have seen that play out like peer review alone is not going to change someone's practice in a radical way usually. That being said, I think peer review serves other functions that we can't necessarily attain just through supervision and mentorship in that it starts to build that person's network.

It exposes them to other interviewers beyond their own jurisdiction and what they're doing at other CACs, both good practice and bad practice. So that's where I think having a skilled facilitator or moderator is important because we need to acknowledge the things that are like, no, we shouldn't now all go back and start doing that thing that seemed like new and different cause you'd never seen it before.

And it's new and different because it's not aligned with. The research or with best practice guidance. that's my caveat. But that being said, I think that exposure to even just little things that people do differently does. Open people's minds up beyond, oh, I've only seen my own CACs interview room, I've never seen somebody use Play-Doh or we always use Play-Doh, but I've never seen it go bad. And now I've seen an interview where the Play-Doh was a huge distraction. And so I can just try to integrate that and have a, broader perspective on, okay, everything has pros and cons, including the different tools that we use, and if it goes poorly, what can I do?

And then that can generate conversation. So I think, the exposure part is important. A little bit of like quality control crowdsourced. Mm-hmm. Which in a good peer review where people are giving robust feedback, we are leaning on each other to hold us accountable and to teach and learn. So I think that peer review has a lot of.

In many cases not yet. Met potential like, potential that's there. And I know that the connections and relationships, at least for the folks in the peer review network, I most recently was part of, was really important. And especially in the absence of a lot of in-person meeting, which if people are dispersed geographically or there's not a lot of in-person training opportunities that are specific to forensic interviewers, we may only see a couple of other interviewers ever in a year or two or three span.

And so peer review can be an opportunity for recognizing that you're part of a larger field of people who hold the same professional responsibility and values.

And I think that's a real benefit of peer view. However, you're not going to be able to the detailed level work to change specific practice things in a peer review.

So you might. Have everybody watch your interview and get some feedback that like, you really should use more open prompts. You're asking closed questions and when there are opportunities when you could have used some other strategies, well, you can receive that feedback and say okay to it.

It doesn't mean that tomorrow you're gonna suddenly know how to make that change. That's actually, if you're in a pattern and you're typically doing that in your interviews, changing that is work. You know, it really, it's like you have a habit and you changing habits, as we all know in many facets of life, is hard.

And changing our interviewing habits is also hard. so you need to have somebody who's gonna be there and hold that mirror up all the time and say, how are we gonna help you move this? So that in your brain and coming out of your mouth is something different in the moment. And that's where somebody who's doing an ongoing routine support work, whether it's specifically only a mentor or supervisor who's also a mentor, or even our colleagues, if you're on a staff or you have, multiple interviewers and we can do some of that work together because I think peer-to-peer mentoring can also be super beneficial.

[00:42:21] **Kelly Bober:** There's a number of things that you said that kind of triggered some thoughts from me related to peer review and one of the things I wanted to point out first is peer review is only as good as the learner is able to hear the information. And I've sat in on peer review is where the person is so busy defending what they've done, that they're not taking anything of value away because they're just not there. And it may be that the structure of peer review is such that you're doing it in front of a audience just like everything else where you're getting feedback, If it's not done properly, it can feel like you're being beat up. Mm-hmm. So I can, understand that.

Some of the other things to consider when you're looking at peer review is that if you're in a large area or you're doing a, like a national peer review platform, that you have different models coming in, so feedback that somebody might criticize you for may be a really good practice in the model that you use.

So it's something to consider. The other thing I would say that is maybe I think not a pro or con, but something to consider in them is that people are cherry picking which interviews they're bringing. Mm-hmm. Most of the time it's either like something that's so horrible that they know that they're gonna get

feedback on the horrible piece that they've already identified themselves, or they pick the one that they felt like they did a really good job.

Most people are not choosing those interviews that. Are there day-to-day interviews, and so they're missing maybe their trends or there are things that are challenging for them. And then also by nature of peer review, there's a usually a really long delay between when something is presented at peer review and when you did it.

Yeah. So your skill may have evolved even from, between when you played it and when you did those interviews. Because of this, we have different levels of peer reviews that we do at our center. We have One-on-one peer review, which is a mentor and learner. Mm-hmm. Then we have interviewer peer review, which is in-house, and then we do state peer review and national peer review.

So there's lots of opportunities that have the benefit of seeing things outside of our area and what's being done on the national level and to get that access to the larger network of people. But there's also that opportunity to have the intimacy of people that you feel safe with and supported with who can have access to an interview that was more recent.

So I think there's some benefits to looking at and of like tiered levels or different types of peer review for different purposes. You can get different things out of them. I love that you had said that peer review is a part of, or a tool that can be used as supervision. And all of the things you both listed of the pros and cons to how that peer review may go is important.

[00:45:08] **Christina Rouse:** It's almost like, I think of it, and this is a very simple analogy of peer review, is like going to get a toolbox at the store, And you bring it home with you. Like you've seen a lot of things. You were told about all of the things inside the toolbox, but without a supervisor and a mentor to help you use those tool, once you bring it back home, some might sit in the box forever and you never use them.

Some tools you might use inappropriately. So really thinking about how you're using peer review and how you're incorporating that into supervision and mentorship, I think is what we're hopeful that the field starts. Moving more towards of, of it being less of, this is the only thing we're doing.

Mm-hmm. And now it's being part of a thing we're doing.

[00:45:53] **Kelly Bober:** I've seen that with smaller centers where you participate in peer review and that's all you need. Yeah. I think we all agree that we think mentorship, and again, supervision is a necessity to hone really good interviewers in the long run.

[00:46:09] **Christina Rouse:** So we talked about the things that centers can do. What are the downsides for people not having mentorship in supervision? I mean, if we use the analogy of a toolbox, you might build a really unstable house. But what are some of the things you've seen in the field happen when we're not providing that mentorship and supervision?

[00:46:28] **Kelly Bober:** I think the saddest thing is when you see an interview that has gone poorly because of somebody's skill. Mm-hmm. And I mean, the ultimate risk is that a child and a child who needs to give a disclosure for whatever reason, doesn't or can't because of the way the interview is conducted and that child is left in danger.

To me, that's the biggest risk. And the saddest piece that's like the ultimate risk, I guess. of not having a well-trained person. And then you have smaller things that, you know, awkward interviews or poor practice or getting your head handed back to you when you go to court to defend something.

That was Questionable. Mm-hmm. Well, I'm gonna play devil's advocate here. Let's say you are that interviewer that does not have supervision, you do not have mentorship. Let's say you are conducting some interviews that aren't ideal and are detrimental to the child. How do you know that? how do you know that that interview's not good or not great?

[00:47:35] **Christina Rouse:** And how do you change

[00:47:36] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** that? Yeah, that's right on track with what I was thinking, Christina. People are gonna learn from somewhere we all are, So if you don't have an identified teacher who has the knowledge and skills, you're gonna have other people teaching you and guiding you, even if you don't realize that it's happening, right?

It could be happening without your awareness, and sometimes that looks like. Team members who aren't, well-versed in the discipline, may be awesome at their own job, but who end up influencing what the interviewer is doing sometimes in ways that are not appropriate and the interviewer doesn't have a counterbalance of someone who's, has the experience and knowledge and comfort level and trusting relationship to say, okay, when somebody asks you to

or says you need to ask this, or you need to take this thing into the interview room, or you need to have them demonstrate this way.

And you feel or know, first of all, helping them know whatever it is not appropriate if they really didn't know. And then once they know, a mentor or supervisor can help them prepare for how do you respond when you're facing that input. And I think for some folks, if they haven't had anybody to fill that mentoring role for them, they've never Set any kind of boundaries with the team members because they maybe didn't know they should or really didn't know how.

So I think that's we all are gonna learn from somewhere, and if as administrators and leaders in the field, we wanna put people, line people up to have a good teacher, an

[00:49:10] **Kelly Bober:** effective teacher. I agree. I think and if you don't learn it from your team, you might learn it from what's worked for you in the past, in other situations.

And it may have been appropriate in that situation. Like say you're a Sunday school teacher or preschool teacher, or you saw how a teacher talked to a kid and it worked when you saw something on TV and it worked. Mm-hmm. You may feel like I can try that or I'm gonna mimic that. And it may not be as appropriate in a forensic setting as it was in some of those other settings.

So, you are right. People are gonna learn and if they're not getting it from. Somebody with some expertise and resources behind it, they're going to, I always say chicken wing it. You're gonna chicken wing it, you're gonna do whatever happens in that moment. And it may not be something that you're proud of later and, or you may not even know what you don't know.

[00:50:00] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** Kelly, I thought of something when you were listing out those roles or scenarios where people might be transferring stuff from other experiences they've had, and I thought, what about parenthood? I was an interviewer before I was a parent, and I can tell you if it had been the other way around, my expectations for what children should be able to do would be really based on my own kids who are, their own selves.

And certainly every child is an individual needs to be approached as an individual, but we need to have appropriate expectations based on a broader body of knowledge about child development than our own children. But

strategies that work with my kids, I would not use in the interview room. Mm-hmm. It would not be appropriate.

So, that's another role that I think can be Yeah. Really tricky to

[00:50:42] **Kelly Bober:** navigate. And I think it even bleeds in even when you're trying not to let it bleed in. Like I think of I'm interviewing a three-year-old and they have a snotty nose. The mom and me is getting a tissue and putting it up to their nose and say, okay, now blow and and like, why is that appropriate? But, it's your instinct if you parented or you've been in that position before. So, having a way and having to be able to broaden what you know, can really help with those kind of your natural inclination. If not the most

[00:51:14] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** appropriate.

Another big risk of not having good mentorship and supervision is the interviewers themselves being harmed by the experience. Mm-hmm. We are talking a lot in the field about secondary traumatic stress and working in trauma exposed environments. I think that there's so much work being done for us to be able to look in-house at our organizations and have better conversations with resources for folks.

But if you don't have anybody really with you on the journey when things get hard, what are you supposed to do? Who are you supposed to turn to? If you've got a good relationship with a mentor or supervisor who also serves as a mentor, that's probably gonna be a person that you're gonna wanna come to.

So, if you're someone who's considering being a mentor and stepping up to the plate, you gotta be ready to have those conversations, and I would recommend you initiate them from day one. That this topic is on the list. And we're gonna talk about this every time. how are you feeling about the work?

How are you being impacted by the work? And so sometimes that has been meant for me. Supporting people and choosing not to be interviewers anymore. I really want us to have like, great workforce that has a long tenure. So I'm not saying that should be the goal of mentorship, but sometimes if people are being harmed and need to leave we should support them lovingly and making a good decision for themselves and they can't get there and make an active choice to either say, actually I'm gonna try these things to mitigate the challenges that I'm having with this.

Can you help me? What are the resources? Cuz I have a deep sense of purpose and connection to the work. So I do wanna stay in, but I've got that mirror that's showing me that I'm struggling or, I've done those things for a while now and I'm recognizing this isn't the right word for me.

And every human being I think, deserves to have that dignity and have work that's meaningful and fulfilling to them. And every child deserves to be interviewed by somebody who's in a good place. So I think that is a real risk of not having mentorship and supervision is we lose more people and the people who do stay can be unintentionally harmed by the work that we're

[00:53:23] **Kelly Bober:** doing.

I'm glad you pointed that out. I think another risk, and I'm looking at this as an administrator, that if you have an interviewer who is rogue or unsupported, that there can be a real risk to one, the reputation of your agency. the team relationships and their faith in that person.

Yeah. So hopefully that you have those resources to prevent that, because that's another level of risk.

[00:53:48] **Christina Rouse:** There's so many variables to consider when you're thinking about mentoring and supervising forensic interviewers. It's not just how they operate inside the interview room. There are so many different facets to consider.

That could lead to super beneficial interviewers that stick around for a long time, or it could take the other path that we addressed already. So, to end our conversation today, I would like for you all to impart your mentorship and supervisor wisdom to our listeners, and maybe give one or two suggestions, maybe to some c a C leaders or chapter directors who are starting to consider how they're gonna build out programming or policies to support interviewers around mentorship and supervision.

What are the high takeaways that you think people need to consider?

[00:54:41] **Kelly Bober:** I have two. One, I would say include your interviewers in that discussion. They're the ones doing the work and they're going to be able to. Even if they're not leading the conversation, you really should consult with them because they have the information and the one impacted.

And then the other thing that I have to offer is a practical piece in terms of implementation. I think when you are supervising or providing supervision for an interviewer or mentoring or mentor onboarding, especially a new person, that is very critical for that feedback to be done in a private and supportive way.

I have personally seen new interviewers get sabotaged where the feedback is happening during the live interview in front of the team. And then the team has lost faith in that interviewer that if she's being corrected by this senior person, whoever it is, then she's doing something wrong.

And then interesting had it where the team is like, I no longer want her to do interviews because she doesn't know what she's doing. So I think it's inappropriate to give corrective feedback in front of the team members.

[00:55:50] **Christina Rouse:** That's great advice.

[00:55:52] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** one of the things that I talked about earlier as far as thinking about who you can pull in to fulfill this role and deciding whether you already have an appropriate person to serve in a mentorship role in-house, or if you need to look outside your c a c to neighboring programs, or even maybe people who are contracting, like I was doing, it's possible to do mentorship work virtually, so you're not limited.

Although I, I always wanna meet somebody in person at least once to establish our connection as human beings. But it's possible to do this in a variety of ways. So I would encourage leaders to recognize the value, be creative. And find the time and time equals money. So find the time and find the money and also acknowledge that this isn't something you can just add on to someone who already has a full plate.

So if you are gonna work with somebody who's in house, what's gonna be taken off of their responsibility list in order for them to fill this role for one or more other people? I don't think we've really talked about this much yet, but I think that you should consider the benefits for the mentor because this is an opportunity for us to help people allow, give people an opportunity to be more deeply engaged in the work.

A lot of interviewers, as they become more skilled, there's no really where for them to go within their organization. If we have like one supervisor and than our direct service staff. And we lose interviewers, including myself and Kelly to be administrators, at some point.

Which doesn't mean we can't still do interviews and it doesn't mean that's bad, but I think that we need to build in more ways for people to progress and still remain engaged in the interviewing work. So, it also provides them with sort of a reason to stay informed about research developments and training opportunities.

Mm-hmm. If it's your role to be helping others do that, then you need to stay informed. so we haven't, I think yet fully articulated this as something good that people can aspire to become, like can aspire to become a forensic interviewing mentor, whether that includes formal supervision as part of that role or not.

And then think about how are we gonna compensate people for that with money or time or an exchange between programs.

[00:58:19] **Christina Rouse:** those are great tips. And I'm sure if we had six other episodes on mentorship and supervision, we would easily be able to fill it with other ideas and topics. So I'm gonna end us on this quote that I found from Jay Lauren Norris.

If you cannot see where you are going, ask someone who's been there before. And I think this can really resonate to a lot of interviewers who are starting out, who might be feeling isolated, who may be very seasoned and tenured. There is always someone in the field who is willing to help you answer your questions or guide you in a direction to make you feel fulfilled in your job.

So Kelly and Lydia, thank you so much for joining me on this conversation, and thank you both for being mentors and leaders in the field of interviewing. Thanks for having us.

[00:59:10] **Lydia Johnson-Grady:** Christina. Thank you for this conversation. It was such a treat to be with both of you today.