Best practices for interviewing older adults with diverse backgrounds and needs: Current research and future directions

Dr. Joshua Wyman, PhD., C. Psych





Joshua Wyman, PhD, C. Psych

Assistant Professor at King's University College at Western University.

Research Interests:

- Prevention, identification and investigative practices in cases of older adult maltreatment.
- Investigative interviewing with populations with special needs.

Registered School and Clinical Psychologist in Ontario.

- Child and adolescent populations.
- Therapy, intervention, assessment, crisis intervention and consultation services.
- School, hospital and private clinic settings.



Training Needs of Health Professionals & Law Enforcement

Study #1: Training Needs of Health Professionals

37 Health professionals in Ontario, Canada who work with older adults.

- ➤ (*Mage* = 36.8 years; 73% female)
- > Years of Experience: 0.5 to 32 (M = 8.52 years).

Qualitative interview and questionnaires.

Answered questions regarding their experiences identifying, assessing and reporting older adult maltreatment.



Frequency of Maltreatment

- <u>24 out of 37 (64.9%)</u> reported observing older adult maltreatment "frequently" and on at least a monthly basis.
- <u>14 out of 37 (37.9%)</u> reported observing maltreatment on a weekly basis.

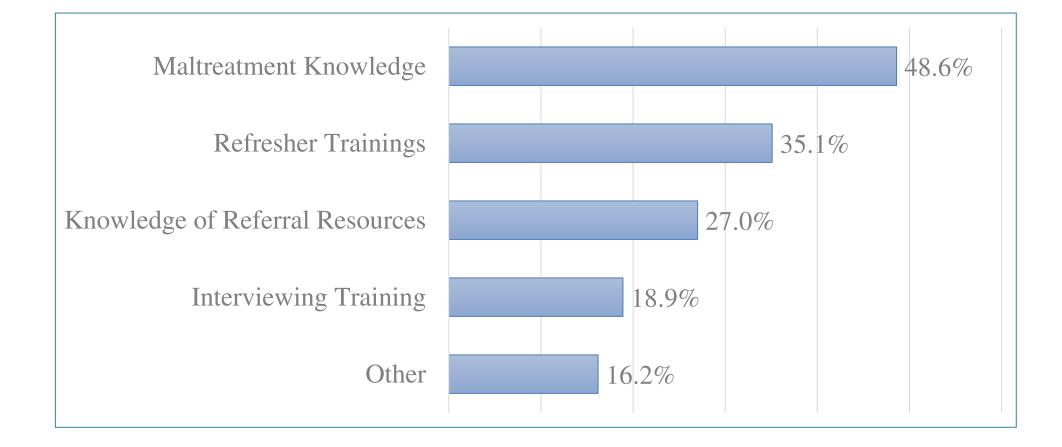
"Sometimes three or four times a week when I'm on my shift. Abuse of elderly—people who don't give them their medicine."

"Oh, probably at least, like <u>I guess at least maybe like, every couple weeks or something</u> <u>like that.</u> There constantly seems to be those kinds of issues coming up."

Barriers to Reporting Maltreatment

Fear of Consequences 83.8% Victim Apprehension 46.0% Limited Rapport 37.4% Insufficient Reporting Knowledge 35.1% Protect Perpetrator 29.7% **Institutional Barriers** 27.0% **Professional Barriers** 27.0% Cognitive Challenges 24.3% **Societal Barriers** 24.3%

Training Needs



Study #2: Canadian law enforcement perceptions of older adult maltreatment, interviewing practices and training needs: A qualitative study

(Wyman, ElSaleh, Dion Larivière, & Malloy, 2025)

Law professionals in Canada who work with older adults were interviewed.

- I. Observations of older adult abuse and neglect.
- II. Current interviewing practices.
- III. Training experiences and recommendations.
- N = 19 (*Mage* = 49 years old; *n*females = 10)
- 17 worked in Ontario
- 2 worked in British Columbia

<u>Years of Experience</u>: 10 to 31 years (M = 20 years).

<u>Level of Experience (*M*):</u> 7.8 out of 10 (Range = 5 to 10).

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Canadian law enforcement perception	ns of older adult maltreatment.
interviewing practices and training ne	
Joshua Wyman ¹ 0 - Roba ElSaleh ¹ - Cassandre Dion Lariv	ière ² • Lindsay Malloy ²
Accepted: 8 January 2025 © The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Society for Police and Criminal	Psychology 2025
Abstract	
Canadian law enforcement during criminal investigations inv ment professionals ($N = 19$) were interviewed about their perc	proved insight into the training and evidence-gathering needs of olving older adult victims and witnesses. Canadian law enforce- eptions of older adult maltreatment, interview practices, training e professionals also completed questionnaires that assessed their
self-reported experience and training supporting older adult and memory aging processes, and their general attitudes tow most participants reported using contextual (e.g., interviewi with older adults, along with pre-interview (e.g., rapport-b discussed specific older adult health, cognitive, emotional a perceptions) factors that can impact an older adult's risk fo abuse and/or neglect. Participants expressed a need for more improved multidisciplinary collaboration and practices for in their perceptions of the common risk factors, perpetrators,	victims, their knowledge of older adult maltreatment risk factors ards the older adult population. During the qualitative interview, g witness in their home) and question-specific accommodations uilding), free-recall, and truth-induction practices. Participants ad socio-cultural (e.g., generational differences in maltreatment r maltreatment, the interviewing process, and the reporting of training pertaining to older adult-specific disabilities, as well as terviewing this population. Furthermore, participants discussed and reporting barriers in cases of older adult maltreatment, as improving the safety of vulnerable older adults. Key directions

population is among the fastest growing in many countries around the world (World Health Organization 2022). Older adults face unique age-related challenges that place them at elevated risk of being victims and witnesses of crimes (Yon et al. 2017) and complicate the law enforcement response to these crimes. Considerable literature to date has focused on identifying the risk factors for OA maltreatment in healthcare settings (see Storey 2020, for a review); however, there is comparatively less literature that discusses how law enforcement can effectively support OA victims of

1 Department of Psychology, King's University College

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ontario Tech

at Western University, London, Canada

University Oshawa ON Canada

Investigative interviews play a crucial role in criminal investigations of maltreatment, especially when there is limited physical evidence or a lack of bystander witnesses. Existing best practice police interviewing guidelines have been developed for the general child (e.g., NICHD protocol; Orbach et al. 2000) and adult (e.g., Achieving Best Evidence Guidelines; Ministry of Justice 2022) populations. Although these guidelines include interviewing questions and strategies that are relevant to OA eyewitnesses (e.g., rapport building and free-recall questions), these guidelines do not address some of the unique characteristics and needs of this considerably heterogeneous population. Older adults are more likely than younger adults to experience physical (e.g., hearing, vision and mobility challenges) and cognitive (e.g., memory and language) challenges that can impact their abilities to effectively report their experienced maltreatment and respond to standard police interviewing questions (see

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iwvman6@uwo.ca

Interviewing Challenges

Interviewing Challenge	%	Response Examples
Health Factors	88%	Memory, language, hearing, vision and mobility challenges that impact interviewing process.
Emotional Factors	65%	Feelings of despair, sadness, regret, shame, embarrassment, fear or denial. Distrust towards the interviewer.
Social-Cultural Factors	47%	Generational differences in how different forms of maltreatment are perceived and reported. Family dynamic problems.
Awareness of Maltreatment	24%	Limited understanding of what older adult maltreatment entails. Lack of awareness of their experienced maltreatment.

Training Needs & Recommendations

Training Recommendation	%	Response Examples
Disability Training	52.6%	Supporting OAs with a dementia- related diseases, and those with vision, hearing and mobility problems.
Multidisciplinary Training	52.6%	How to effectively collaborate with medical, bank, and anti-fraud specialists; more knowledge of OA community referral resources.
Interviewing Training & Guidelines	42.1%	Question and interview adaptations for OAs; memory enhancing question strategies; sworn statement adaptations.
More Comprehensive Training	31.6%	More refresher and frequent training opportunities; more comprehensive OA training.
Older Adult Rights Training	21.1%	Increased knowledge of Power of Attorney role and responsibilities; credibility assessments for OAs; confidentiality rights; OA legal wills.

Study #3 (Ongoing): Police Interview Practices with Older Adults with Cognitive Impairments and Training Needs

Objectives: Survey that explores law enforcement experiences, practices and training interviewing older adults who are:

- Experiencing a form of cognitive degeneration (e.g., Alzheimer's disease).
- Members of Indigenous communities.

Eligibility: Law enforcement professional in Canada.

- Experience interviewing older adults, formally or informally.
- Data collection is ongoing.

Contact Information:

• Dr. Joshua Wyman: jwyman6@uwo.ca

Participate In:



Police Interviewing Research

Dr. Joshua Wyman, Assistant Professor at King's University College at Western University, is conducting an online survey that is designed to enhance police practices and training for interviewing older adult victims and witnesses.

ELIGIBILITY:

Employed as a law enforcement professional in Canada.

- 1. This study will take between <u>45-60 minutes</u> to complete.
- 2. Participants will be compensated with a <u>\$30 Amazon e-gift card</u>.
- 3. All information provided will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Survey Link: https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dgpuD64sd9DLdpc You can also contact Dr. Joshua Wyman at jwyman6@uwo.ca for information.



Participant Characteristics

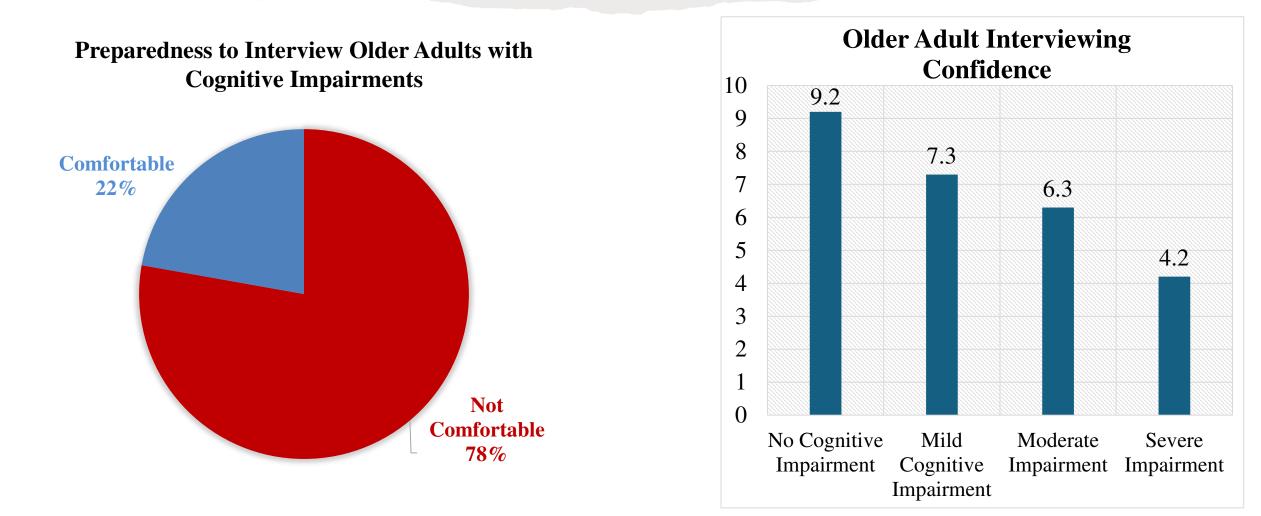
- 27 law enforcement professionals in Ontario have completed this study to date.
- Detectives, frontline police officers, constables, fraud investigators.
- *M*age = 43.9 years
- 8.1 out of 10 average self-reported level of experience.

This study is ongoing.

• We hope to recruit 80 to 100 law enforcement professionals.

Survey Topic	Subtopics
Police Interviewing Experiences and Confidence	 Police Interviewing Experiences with Older Adults Self-Reported Confidence Interviewing Older Adults with Cognitive Impairments
Police Interviewing Practices	1. Police Interview Question Strategies
Police Training Experiences	1. Older Adult Training Received and Confidence in Training Preparedness
Alzheimer's Disease Knowledge	 Performance on ADKS. Self-Reported Experience and Confidence
Interviewing Older Adults in Indigenous Communities	 Approach to Policing in Indigenous Communities Importance of Ensuring Culturally Appropriate Police Practices Future Changes for Indigenous Communities

Preliminary Findings (N = 27)Law Enforcement Training Preparedness & Confidence



Topic	% of Participants Who Received Training	Mean Confidence in Training Preparedness
Interview practices with all populations	92.6%	8.6 out of 10
Interviewing older adults specifically	33.3%	6.6 out of 10
Dementia-related diseases	25.9%	4.5 out of 10
Older adults with memory challenges	18.5%	3.9 out of 10
Older adults with language challenges	11.1%	4.3 out of 10
Older adults with hearing challenges	18.5%	4.5 out of 10
Older adults with vision challenges	11.1%	4.5 out of 10
Older adults with mobility challenges	22.2%	5.6 out of 10
Older adults with mental health challenges	25.9%	5.2 out of 10
Multicultural training	51.9%	6.3 out of 10
Older adults from Aboriginal, First Nations	29.6%	4.8 out of 10
or Indigenous groups		
Older adult legal rights	22.2%	5.4 out of 10
Power of Attorney laws and rights	40.7%	5.8 out of 10
Risk factors for older adult physical abuse	48.1%	6.1 out of 10
Risk factors for older adult sexual abuse	40.7%	5.3 out of 10
Risk factors for older adult psychological abuse	44.4%	5.3 out of 10
Risk factors for older adult neglect	37.0%	5.6 out of 10
Risk factors for older adult financial exploitation	55.6%	6.7 out of 10
Referral services and supports for older adults	44.4%	5.5 out of 10

Training Background & Confidence

Older Adult Victims & Witnesses: Important Considerations

Age-Related Differences in Eyewitness Performance

Older adults can provide accurate, reliable and detailed rich eyewitness reports.

• Performance similar to younger adults on memory recognition tasks.

However, older adults perform <u>worse</u> than younger adults on measures of:

- 1. Free-recall memory quantity.
- 2. Free-recall memory accuracy.
- 3. Lineup identification accuracy.
- 4. Suspect distance threshold.
- 5. Misinformation effect.
- 6. Expert perceptions of memory performance.



The Oxford Handbook of

the law

Quas [ed.]

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Allison D. Redlich (ed.), Jodi A.

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29 Older Adults as Victims and Witnesses

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Abstract

The older adult population is one of the fastest growing in the United States due to advances in medicine and aging baby boomers. Developmentally, bodies and minds go through changes as they age that contribute to victimization risk and eyewitness accuracy. Although official crime statistics suggest that older adults are infrequently crime victims, they may fear being victimized at a greater rate than other age groups and they are at increased risk of being victimized by family members who are entrusted to care for them. Older adults who are victimized or who witness another crime can be called upon to serve as an eyewitness. Eyewitness research that has focused on older adults as eyewitnesses has found that they generally do not perform as well as younger adults due to both developmental and generational differences. Using older adults in research requires creativity and extra efforts, but it is a worthwhile pursuit, given their potential for victimization and orher involvement in the legal system.

Keywords: older adults, elder, victim, victimization, eyewitness, witness Subject: Developmental Psychology, Criminal and Forensic Psychology, Psychology Series: Oxford Library of Psychology

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

Memory Recall: Older Adults with Dementia

Older adults with dementia perform relatively <u>lower</u> than healthy older adults on measures of:

- 1. Emotional and non-emotional word recognition (Nieuwenhuis-Mark et al., 2009).
- 2. Free-recall of autobiographical events (Wiglesworth & Mosqueda, 2011).

	Group		
	Controls	MCI	AD
Total recall	104 (17.3)	72.2 (15.4)	49.5 (22.9)
Nonemotional	25.0 (5.0)	16.8 (3.7)	11.1 (5.9)
Emotional	25.4 (6.1)	18.8 (4.7)	12.4 (5.4)
Separate word lists recall			
Standard	26.3 (4.3)	17.8 (3.7)	12.9 (7.2)
Neutral	25.0 (5.0)	16.8 (3.7)	11.1 (5.9)
Positive	26.5 (4.8)	18.5 (4.8)	13.1 (6.2)
Negative	26.3 (6.1)	19.2 (5.5)	12.4 (5.7)
HADS scores			
Anxiety	3.2 (2.5)	3.7 (3.7)	2.8 (2.7)
Depression	2.9 (2.3)	3.8 (3.1)	2.5 (1.8)

Abbrevations: MCI, mild cognitive impairment; AD, Alzheimer's disease

^a Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) scores for the 3 groups are also provided.

Table from: Nieuwenhuis-Mark, R. E., Schalk, K., & de Graaf, N. (2009). Free recall and learning of emotional word lists in very elderly people with and without dementia. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias*, 24(2), 155-162. https://doi.org/10.1177/1533317508330561

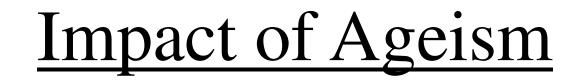
Capacity Can Be Static OR It Can Fluctuate

For many adults, cognitive and psychological functioning remains relatively consistent day-to-day. Some factors that can impact our day-today functioning include:

- Chronic fatigue, stress or pain.
- Exposure to trauma.
- Intoxication or substance use withdrawal.

Older Adults with Dementia-Related Diseases: Level of functioning progressively gets worse over time.

- Level of functioning can <u>fluctuate</u> over the course of the day.
- **Sundowning** is increased confusion that people living with dementia may experience from dusk through night-time.

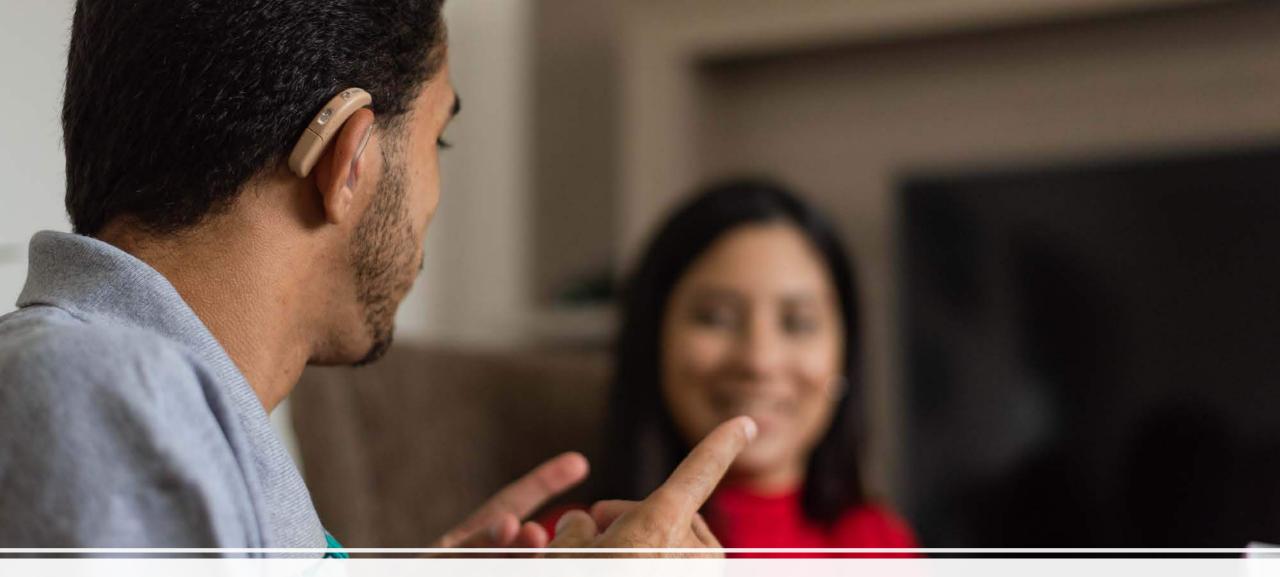


1. Impact on Interviewer:

- Interview may forgo asking important open-ended interview questions and rely more on closedended practices.
- Interviewer may "infantilize" older adult, which reduces level of trust, respect and rapport.

2. Impact on Interviewee:

- Causes an older adult to doubt or distrust their own memory capacity.
- Can increase risk for suggestibility and interviewer compliance.
- **3.** Impacts juror perceptions of older adult eyewitnesses.
 - Mock jurors with higher ageist attitudes had more negative perceptions of on older adult victim of neglect (Wasarhaley & Golding, 2017).
 - Mock jurors were less likely to convict a perpetrator of older adult financial exploitation when the eyewitness report came from an older adult with a cognitive impairment (Golding et al., 2013).



Interviewing Older Adults: Best Practices & Accommodations

Increasing disclosures of older adult maltreatment: A review of best practices for interviewing older adult eyewitnesses and victims (Wyman & Malloy, 2024)

Provided a comprehensive overview of the existing older adult police interviewing literature.

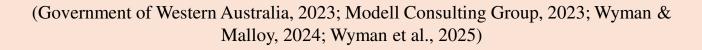
Effective Strategies:

- Rapport building
- Cultural responsivity
- Supportive and empathetic demeanor
- Free-recall invitations.
- Open-ended follow-up prompts.
- Wh-questions.
- Closed-ended questions that build upon what older adult previously discussed (e.g., clarification questions).

Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 2024 Vol. 31, No. 2, 274–292, https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2023.2192260	Routledg
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Increasing disclosures of older adult maltreatment: a revie practices for interviewing older adult eyewitnesses and vict	
Joshua Wyman ^a 👩 and Lindsay Malloy ^b	
^a Department of Psychology, King's University College at Western University, Lond Canada; ^b Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ontario Tech University, Osl Canada	
The current article provides a contemporary review of the best practices for older adults about crimes they witnessed or experienced. Specifically, detailed overview of how investigators can use a range of interviewing ad procedures to acquire detailed and accurate maltreatment disclosures from o addition to discussing well-established investigative interviewing practices building, free-recall, cognitive instructions and prompts), this article alse more recent literature on the benefits of multidisciplinary investigations, us technology and interview accommodations, along with effective practices with minority and marginalized older adults. Lastly, several research, pro policy recommendations are provided for supporting older adults during interviews.	we provide a laptations and lder adults. In 6 (e.g. rapport 5 summarizes 56 of assistive 6 for working fessional and
Keywords: diversity; eyewitness reporting; interviewing; law enforcement; r memory; older adults; policing; public policy.	naltreatment;
Article History: Received 31 October 2022; Accepted 28 February 2023	

Older Adult Interviewing Adaptations

- 1. Interview older adult at their personal residence.
- 2. Wearing plainclothes during interviews with police officers.
- 3. Technological aids (Bluetooth receivers for hearing aid devices and voice amplifiers).
- 4. Redirections.
- 5. Timing of the interview, such as in the morning.
- 6. Follow-up or additional interview opportunities.
- 7. Follow-up communication and check-ins are encouraged.







Interviewing Older Adults with Cognitive Impairments

- 1. Plan for <u>more time</u> to interview older adult.
- 2. Consult with caregivers, family members and multidisciplinary professionals.
- 3. Do not infantilize person.
 - Have an understanding of your own biases and stereotypes towards older adults with cognitive challenges.
- 4. If possible, have support person nearby or in the same building.
 - Older adult may require support with administering medication, going to the washroom or if they become distressed or highly confused.
- 5. Acquiring consent is an ongoing process.
- 6. Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Always face interviewee when communicating.
 - Do not raise your voice to a high degree. Have a low-pitch and reassuring tone.
 - Avoid overly complex words, slangs and acronyms.
 - Incorporate descriptive nonverbal gestures when communicating verbally.
 - Explaining your actions may also be needed.

(Government of Western Australia, 2023; Modell Consulting Group, 2024; Wyman et al., 2024)

Interviewing Older Adults with Cognitive Impairments

7. Chunking information is helpful.

- Step-by-step instructions with pauses and clarification opportunities.
- Breaking up larger questions into smaller parts.

8. Keep questions short and focused.

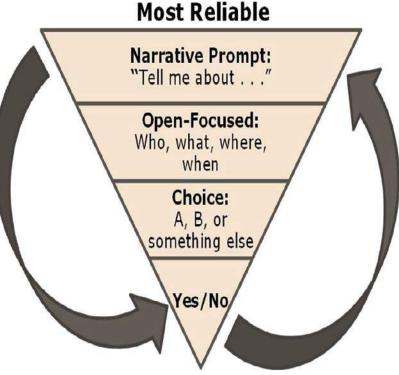
- Focused open-ended questions and prompts are especially helpful.
- Follow-up closed-ended questions that build-upon what was previously disclosed.
- 9. Avoid cognitively taxing questions.
- **10.** Be prepared to repeat yourself or reintroduce yourself.
- **11.** Do not argue with person or try to orient them to reality.
 - Older adult awareness of the situation, context of interview or sense of present reality may change over the course of the interview.
 - Elevated stress increases likelihood of confusion.

(Government of Western Australia, 2023; Modell Consulting Group, 2024; Wyman et al., 2024)

Interview Practices to Avoid

- Leading and/or suggestive questions.
- Multiple questions.
- Overly broad questions.
- Unsupportive demeanor.
- Confrontations.
- Blaming the victim.
- Overly long interviews.

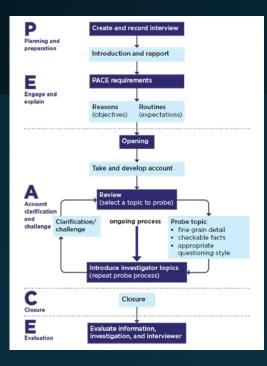
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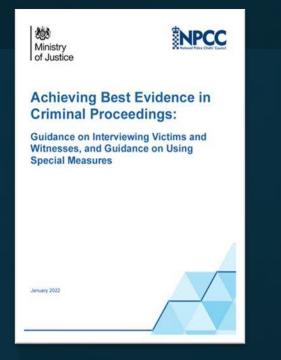


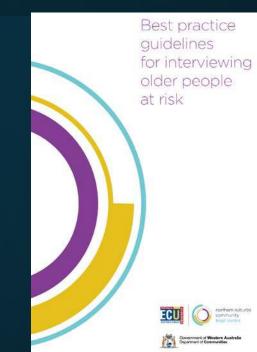
Least Reliable

The Recycling Funnel Model. (Modell Consulting Group, 2024).

Best Practice Interviewing Guidelines









Safe Accessible Forensic Interviewing for Elders

2-Day MDT Training

Participant Manual



Key Takeaways

- 1. Health and law enforcement professionals in Ontario have expressed an important need for <u>improved training and resources</u> for supporting older adults most at risk for maltreatment.
- 2. Like younger adults, older adults benefit from open-ended recall questions and follow-up prompts.
 - Overly broad, complex and cognitively taxing questions are less effective with older adults over the age of 75 and those with lower cognitive scores.
 - <u>Planning in advance</u> for the interview is essential.
- **3.** Recently, best practice interviewing recommendations have been developed for older adults.
 - Several accommodations exist for older adults with cognitive, physical and mental health challenges.
 - Research is needed to assess the efficacy of these training resources and interviewing guidelines.



Any Questions or Comments?

Thank you for your time!

If you are interested in learning more about our research, please feel free to contact me at jwyman6@uwo.ca

I can also contact you by email if you prefer 😳



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SSHRC CRSH Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines

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