

University of Southern California Law

From the Selected Works of Thomas D. Lyon

Summer July 23, 2020

7. USC Child Interviewing Lab Tele-Forensic Interview Protocol

Georgia M. Lundon, *University of Southern California*

Jordan E. Sargent, *University of Southern California*

Hayden M. Henderson, *University of Southern California*

Jennifer Gongola, *University of Southern California*

Thomas D. Lyon, *University of Southern California*



USC Child Interviewing Lab Tele-Forensic Interview Protocol

Georgia M. Lundon

With the assistance of Jordan E. Sargent, Hayden M. Henderson, Jennifer Gongola,
and Thomas D. Lyon

USC Child Interviewing Lab
University of Southern California School of Law

July, 2020

© 2020 USC Child Interviewing Lab. Please feel free to contact childinterviewinglab@law.usc.edu for further information about this protocol and/or our transcription and interviewing work. If you're interested in training or research collaboration utilizing your remote interviews, please contact us. Additional copies of this protocol can be downloaded for free; google "Bepress Lyon" and look for it under practitioner guides.



Before closures and health advisories relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, our forensic interviews were conducted from Shelter Care at Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court. Since May 20th of this year, we have conducted tele-forensic interviews that involve children being transported to the USC Gould School of Law to be interviewed by a remote forensic interviewer via Zoom.

This document outlines our protocol (including optimal Zoom settings and product recommendations).

Role of the FI Invigilator

We have one staff member who has agreed to invigilate our interviews at the Law School, in order to minimise potential exposure. Our invigilator is responsible for the following:

- Cleaning before/after the interview
- Setting up FI equipment
- Escorting the child and their caregiver
- Monitoring the FI
- Assisting the child
- Creating DVD copies of the FI

Once an interview has been scheduled, our invigilator will be in direct contact with the child's caregiver and will meet them on the USC campus on the day of the interview.

Our invigilator always wears PPE (including a vinyl face shield) and has cloth facemasks on hand for families who do not have them.

FI Setup (Including Zoom Settings)

We have permission to use rooms at the USC Gould of Law Library. The child is interviewed alone and remains in their room during breaks. Our invigilator monitors the interview from the adjacent room. The child knows our invigilator is close by and that they can ask her anytime they need something (e.g., a bathroom break).

The child's family have access to a room downstairs (out of earshot) and cannot accompany the child during the FI.

We recommend using the Zoom Webinar feature, where the child is the host and the interviewer is invited as a panelist. Please see 'Zoom Webinar Settings' for further details.

We test the setup approximately 45 minutes before each interview, to ensure everything is functional and that we are happy with video/sound quality. For specific product recommendations, please see 'Product Recommendations' at the end of the document.



Child's Setup

The child's room is basic but comfortable, to minimize potential distractions (remove swivel chairs!)

Once the children are inside the room, they are directed to remove their facemask and sanitize their hands.

We have found that wired headphones encourage the child to stay seated and attentive during the interview, by physically anchoring them to the monitor. We recommend purchasing two types of headphones. For younger children, we recommend smaller over-ear headphones that fit their heads well- and don't have anything that can be tugged/played with. For older children, we recommend high-quality over-ear headphones with a microphone to maximize audio quality.

We recommend a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse that can be removed whilst the interview is taking place. This prevents the child from using the computer or potentially ending the interview.

We also recommend using a digital voice recorder throughout the interview, which is placed on the table close by. This is a backup in case of a catastrophic technology failure, so that there is some record of the interview.

- Wired internet connection (Ethernet cable)
- Monitor on desk
- High quality wide angle webcam with microphone
- Non-swivel chair
- Bluetooth keyboard/mouse (removed during the FI)
- Wired over ear headphones (can include microphone for older children)
- Digital voice recorder (as an absolute backup)
- Background screen (optional)

Interviewer's Setup

Our interviewers conduct tele-forensic interviews from home, where they set up a paper folding screen to neutralize their background and minimize potential distractions. A strong (and preferably wired) Internet connection is essential.

We recommend using a digital voice recorder throughout the interview, which is placed on the table close by. This is a backup in case of a catastrophic technology failure, so that there is some record of the interview.

Our interviewer will have their phone close by throughout the interview. During the break, interviewers will turn off their video and communicate with the lab team (and potentially the MDT). Please see 'Observing the FI and communicating with the interviewer' for further information.

- Wired internet connection (Ethernet cable)
- Own computer



- Fair webcam
- Earphones (optional, but can be helpful with quiet child)
- Digital voice recorder (as an absolute backup)
- Background screen (minimise distractions for child)

Zoom Webinar Settings

We use the Zoom Webinar feature, and recommend the following settings. These settings can be saved into a webinar template. Our invigilator will start the webinar before meeting the child, so that they don't need to follow the child into the interview room or help them start the webinar.

The child is the host of the webinar, and the interviewer acts as a panelist. We include our conference call information in the webinar description (see 'Observing the FI and Communicating with the Interviewer' for more information).

We use different video settings for the live interview compared to the recording. We find that 'active speaker view' is the least distracting for the child as they don't always have to look at themselves. However, we require 'gallery view' for the recording so that the child's expressions and body language are always visible.

To maintain the privacy and security of the FI, each attendee must be manually approved.

1. Create a Zoom account with Webinar capabilities
2. Create an FI Webinar template with the following settings:
3. Tick 'Registration Required'
4. Approve video for host and panellists
5. Set video settings to active speaker view
6. Disable Q&A
7. Enable Practise Session (allows you to test without recording, but do also perform a recorded test)
8. Record the webinar automatically (to cloud or both computer/cloud)
9. Invite the interviewer as a panellist (an invite will be sent automatically)
10. Under 'Registration' set this to 'Manually Approve' (you will come back to this section to manually approve attendees)
11. Use 'Invitations' to copy/paste the registration link

Zoom Recording Settings

You may add timestamps to the recording if required.

1. Open Zoom recording settings:
2. Check that 'Cloud recording' is ticked
3. Tick 'Record gallery view with shared screen'
4. Tick 'Optimise the recording for 3rd party video editor' (we use an editor to trim the empty room in the beginning, as well as to boost audio where required)



Zoom Reports

We use the 'Reports' feature to monitor who registered to observe the FI, as well as who watched (and their duration of viewing).

Observing the FI and Communicating with the Interviewer

We have at least two members of lab staff observing the FI (including the invigilator). In some cases, we have the DI, Law enforcement, CSW, or the DA observing remotely.

We share the FI registration link with the MDT, and include details about our conference call in the webinar description.

Since our invigilator is watching from the next room, she is available if the child needs anything during the interview or the break.

Group message 'Whats App' (Staff Members Only)

During the interview, lab members use a secure group message to communicate with the interviewer, offering live feedback and question suggestions. We have found that the interviewer can discreetly glance at their phone as they make notes, without children noticing.

Conference Call 'EasyConfCall' (MDT)

We use this conference call provider to talk to the interviewer during breaks. This is particularly helpful for making sure we have enough information for the DI or law enforcement. 'EasyConfCall' works internationally and charges local telephone rates.

Child-friendly Resources/Activities During the Break

Younger children are given a lap puppy at the beginning of the interview. The lap puppy is a weighted (5lb) soft toy that sits on their lap to act as a weighted blanket and encourage them to remain seated and calm during the interview. We have noticed some children stroking the puppy and using it as a self-regulation tool. The lap puppy is machine-washable.

We recommend keeping the child at their desk/table during the break. When the interviewer calls for a break, our invigilator will return the keyboard and mouse to the table and direct the child towards their break activity. Children are offered a water bottle and a pre-packaged snack. The webinar remains open and recording throughout the interview break.

YouTube Kids (Break)

Younger children have access to a pre-made YouTube Kids account with child-friendly videos, including animals and cartoons.



Spotify (Break)

Older children and teens have access to a Spotify account with settings restricting them to radio edits (non-explicit).

Eliciting Children's Reactions to Remote Interviewing

Before closure (when we move back to a rapport-building topic), we ask an additional question: "How did you feel about talking to me on the computer?" followed up by "you said [child's reaction], tell me more about that" if the child answers with a single word. This enables the child to express any discomfort that they might have felt, and allows us to monitor children's satisfaction with the approach.

Storing and Sharing the Recorded FI

We compress and boost the video file (using Handbrake) and upload it to our secure servers for transcription by our research assistants. Our invigilator creates DVDs to be submitted to court along with copies of the transcribed interview.

Product Recommendations

Technology

- Logitech C930e 1080p HD Video Webcam (90-Degree Extended View)
- Sony Digital Voice Recorder UX Series

Child-friendly

- Renuvee Weighted Lap Pad for Kids (Lap Puppy)
https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07P7HW5YH/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o06_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1

Useful Resources

- NCA Emergency Tele-Forensic Interview Guidelines
<https://learn.nationalchildrensalliance.org/telefi>
- EPA Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>