

1. **Blasbalg, U., Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., Karni-Visel, Y., & Ahern, E. C. (2018). Is Interviewer Support Associated With the Reduced Reluctance and Enhanced Informativeness of Alleged Child Abuse Victims?. Law and Human Behavior. Advance online publication. doi: org/10.1037/lhb0000303**

Child maltreatment victims are often reluctant to report abuse when formally interviewed. Evidence-based guidelines like the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Standard Investigative Interview Protocol do not adequately address such reluctance because they are focused on cognitive rather than socioemotional strategies. The present study was designed to determine whether the Revised National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Protocol, which emphasizes supportive interviewing more than the standard protocol does, might predict increases in the overall informativeness and reductions in the reluctance of alleged victims. A total of 254 interviews, 166 using the revised protocol and 88 using the standard protocol, were conducted with 4.06- to 13.98-year-old children ($M=9.20$, $SD=2.49$) who disclosed multiple incidents of physical abuse by their parents and were thus expected to be more reluctant than victims of extrafamilial abuse. We coded indices of interviewer support and question types, children's reluctance, and informativeness in each utterance during the substantive phases of the interviews. The Revised Protocol was associated with better interviewer support and questioning as well as reduced reluctance and increased informativeness on the part of the children. These findings document the value of training interviewers to attend to the socioemotional needs of suspected abuse victims during investigative interviews.

2. **Karni-Visel, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., & Blasbalg, U. (2019). Facilitating the expression of emotions by alleged victims of child abuse during investigative interviews using the Revised NICHD Protocol. *Child maltreatment*, 24(3), 310-318. doi: 10.1177/1077559519831382.**

Abstract

Children's testimony is often critical to the initiation of legal proceedings in abuse cases. In forensic interviews, the expression of emotions can powerfully enhance both the quality of children's statements and perceptions that their statements are coherent and credible. However, children rarely express their emotions when reporting abusive events. The Revised The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Protocol (RP) was designed to emphasize socioemotional communication during forensic interviews and thus should be

associated with more extensive and diverse expressions of emotions by alleged victims of abuse. The present study focused on forensic interviews (178 using the Revised and 100 using the Standard NICHD Protocol) with victims of physical child abuse whose allegations were corroborated using independent evidence. Detailed content coding showed that the RP was associated with the expression of more different emotions, more expression of abuse-related emotions, and more expression of emotions related to the interview context. Emotional expressiveness was associated with increased informativeness, and the association between the type of protocol and informativeness was fully mediated by emotional expressiveness. These results suggest that the Revised Protocol facilitates the expression of emotions by alleged victims of abuse in a way that enhances the value of children's testimony in multiple ways.

3. Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M., Blasbalg, U., & Karni-Visel, Y. (in press). The dynamics of two-session interviews with suspected victims of abuse who are reluctant to make allegations. *Trauma and Psychopathology*.

Abstract

Supportive forensic interviews conducted in accordance with the NICHD Revised Protocol (RP) help many alleged victims describe abusive experiences. When children remain reluctant to make allegations, the RP guides interviewers to 1) focus on rapport building and non-suggestive support in a first interview, and 2) plan a second interview to allow continued rapport building before exploring for possible abuse. We explored the dynamics of such two-session RP interviews. Of 204 children who remained reluctant in an initial interview, we focused on 104 who made allegations when re-interviewed a few days later. A SEM model revealed that interviewer support during the first session predicted children's cooperation during the rapport-building phase of the second session, which, in turn, predicted more spontaneous allegations, which were associated with the interviewers' enhanced use of open-ended questions. Together, these factors mediated the effects of support on children's free recall of forensically important information. This highlighted the importance of emphasizing rapport with reluctant children, confirming that some children may need more time to build rapport even with supportive interviewers.

4. Blasbalg, U., Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., & Karni-Visel, Y., Ahern, E. C. (in press). Adherence to the Revised NICHD Protocol Recommendations for Conducting Repeated Supportive Interviews is Associated with the Likelihood that Children Will Allege Abuse. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*.

Because intensely reluctant children often fail to report being abused even when they are supportively interviewed, the Revised NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) Protocol (RP) guides interviewers to delay discussion of sensitive topics and build rapport before scheduling a follow-up interview in which children might feel more comfortable. We sought to determine whether adherence to these recommendations was associated with the children's propensity to make allegations. Repeated forensic interviews were conducted with 202 Israeli children aged 3-14 who did not make allegations in the first interview, but of whom 104 made allegations during the second interview. The interviews were coded to identify interviewers' provision of support and types of substantive questions (invitations vs. closed ended), as well as children's signs of reluctance, responsiveness, and informativeness. Interviewer behavior was represented with a latent variable reflecting the interviewers' expression of support, use of invitations, and the avoidance of closed-ended questions. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) showed that adherence to the suggested interviewing model was positively associated with children being more likely to allege abuse (total effect: $\beta = .29$). This association was mediated by children's enhanced cooperativeness in the second interview (indirect effect: $\beta = .16$). These findings suggest that repeated interviews can be useful despite the additional financial costs.