
Graduate Certificate in Investigative Interview Management

Cognitive Interviewing Techniques

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The Cognitive Interviewing Techniques are a set of methods used during investigative interviews to enhance the memory recall of the interviewee. These techniques are designed to help interviewers gather accurate and detailed information from witnesses, victims, or suspects by tapping into the cognitive processes involved in memory retrieval.

The Cognitive Interviewing Techniques were first developed by psychologists in the 1980s as an alternative to traditional police interviewing methods. The goal of these techniques is to improve the quality and quantity of information obtained during interviews while minimizing the risk of contamination or distortion of memory.

Key elements of the Cognitive Interviewing Techniques include:

1. **Mental Reinstatement of Context:** This technique involves instructing the interviewee to mentally recreate the context of the event they are being asked about. By encouraging the interviewee to recall sensory details, emotions, and thoughts from the time of the event, this technique can help trigger memories that may have been forgotten or overlooked.
2. **Report Everything:** Interviewers using this technique instruct the interviewee to report all information, even if they think it is irrelevant or unimportant. This approach aims to prevent the interviewee from filtering out potentially valuable details and encourages a more comprehensive account of the event.
3. **Change Perspective:** By asking the interviewee to recall the event from different viewpoints or in a different sequence, interviewers can help uncover additional details or inconsistencies in the interviewee's account. This technique can also help prevent the interviewee from relying on preconceived narratives or assumptions.
4. **Reverse Order Recall:** Instructing the interviewee to recall the event in reverse chronological order can help disrupt any scripted or rehearsed accounts and encourage a more spontaneous and accurate recollection of the events.
5. **Cognitive Interviewing Techniques** also involve building rapport with the interviewee, using open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses, and providing support and reassurance throughout the interview process.

The Cognitive Interviewing Techniques have been widely adopted by law enforcement agencies, intelligence services, and other organizations involved in investigative interviewing. Research has shown that these techniques can significantly improve the quality of information obtained during interviews and reduce the risk of false or inaccurate statements.

However, implementing Cognitive Interviewing Techniques can also present challenges, such as the need for specialized training for interviewers, the time-consuming nature of the techniques, and the potential for interviewees to resist or misunderstand the process.

Overall, the Cognitive Interviewing Techniques are a valuable tool for enhancing the accuracy and reliability of information obtained during investigative interviews. By leveraging the cognitive processes involved in memory retrieval, these techniques can help interviewers gather detailed and accurate accounts of events from witnesses, victims, and suspects.