



MARCUS WILLIAMS TRAINING ACADEMY

Title IX Training Program



ASSESSING CREDIBILITY

Lesson 2: Title IX Training Program



ABOUT ME



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- MS in Criminal Justice
- 20 years investigative experience
- NCIS, Brigham Young University, Pentagon (responded to 9/11 attacks)



DEFINITION

A credibility assessment is a formal process of determining whether or not a person and/or information is trustworthy or believable.

- In an investigation or hearing, you are determining if you can or should believe one party over the other.
 - Ultimately, you are deciding which statement will carry more weight in your conclusion.



WHEN?

- We assess credibility every day in every interaction:
 - Friends
 - Co-workers
 - Social Media
 - News
 - Public Figures
- Constantly deciding what and who to believe.



HOW?

We use:

- Past experiences
- Education
- Values
- Beliefs
- **Biases**



STOP!

- In an investigation, your credibility assessment must be evidence based.
- Cross examination is designed to attack credibility. Remain focused.



YOU DECIDE

There are two approaches to assessing credibility:

- Attitude of Belief and Openness
 - I take what I am given at face value and then evaluate the evidence.
- Mistrust
 - I don't believe anyone until the evidence proves it.



BEST APPROACH

- Both approaches can be used effectively.
- But an attitude of belief tends to invite better information.
- People tend to share more with those who appear to believe what they are saying.



EXAMPLE

- Someone steals your wallet. You approach a police officer on the street to report the crime.
 - Approach 1: What does the thief look like? What does your wallet look like? In what direction did the thief run?
 - Approach 2: Can you prove to me you had a wallet?



EXAMPLE

- Does proof it was your wallet really matter right now?
- Will further investigation answer that question anyway?
- What are we losing by first trying to prove you had a wallet to steal?



THE WHOLE TRUTH

- Every interview will contain truths and falsehoods.
- You do it too!! Every time you tell a story to friends, you add details to make it more interesting.
- Are the falsehoods deliberate attempts to mislead? Or told to make you believe the story?



LITTLE LIES

- When you start with an attitude of disbelief, you create an atmosphere where the person has to figure out what you need to hear in order to believe.
- That is when they may embellish. It is in reaction to you, not a deliberate attempt to mislead.



PERSPECTIVE

- You are looking at the situation as an outsider.
- You are interviewing people or reviewing testimony of people who witnessed what happened or people who experienced what happened.
- Every person has a different perspective, even in the same situation.
- Your job is to assess if the stories are reasonable considering that person's perspective.
 - Take into account the person's belief's, culture, education, and experience.



PUZZLE

- You cannot get the entire picture from one person.
- As you speak with more people and look at more evidence, the story of what happened will emerge.
- You will learn which information is relevant.



BELIEVE THEN VERIFY

- This applies to BOTH sides!
- What information can be corroborated?
 - How?
 - By whom?
 - By what evidence?
- Corroboration enhances credibility.
 - Even if you are corroborating negative information.



WHAT IF EVIDENCE DOESN'T HELP?

- What if both sides could be true?
- What if there is no indication of lying or misleading, just a lack of knowledge or a different perspective?
- IT IS POSSIBLE TO BELIEVE BOTH SIDES!!
- What if the evidence speaks for itself?



OVERRELIANCE

- Your credibility assessment should only be a small factor in your decision.
- Evidence and corroboration matter.
- Credibility is **more** important if there is positive evidence showing a **lack** of credibility (proven lies, proven deliberate falsehoods).



HISTORY

- Look at history as a guide or indicator, but do not base your credibility assessment on the past.
- You are investigating an allegation in the present that may not be related in any way.
- Don't judge credibility based on unrelated or irrelevant behavior.
- Be careful in weighing cross examination testimony that is not relevant.



ARTICULATE

- Evidence based
 - For every assertion of credibility or lack thereof, you must be able to back it up with evidence.
 - You must be able to explain how your evidence proves the person is less credible.
 - Your unsupported disbelief is not evidence. That's on YOU!



LIE DETECTOR

- Sorry, but you are a horrible lie detector.
- Baseline - body language - patterns
- It all goes back to believe and verify.



CONCLUSION

- We are worse at assessing credibility than we think.
- Don't allow your biases to sneak in under the guise of a credibility assessment.
- Evidence based
- Believe but verify.

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