



F11 False Confessions in Juveniles: Do Juveniles Know and Understand Their Miranda Rights?

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the importance of providing juveniles with knowledge about the Fifth Amendment. Statistics of false confessions pertaining to juveniles will be examined. As a result, this presentation will highlight the importance of educating youth (and their caregivers) about their constitutional legal rights.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by identifying factors that can cause false confessions and will examine different ways that can assist law enforcement personnel to prevent unknowingly obtaining a false confession. This presentation will look at possible procedural changes in law enforcement policy and how the community can work together to lower that risk of false confessions and reduce the economic impact of these. The study also examined whether there were differences in gender, as well as an understanding of the meaning of the term “in custody” between adults and juveniles.

This study, conducted via social media, was an internet-based survey of 100 adults above the age of 18 years, who were parents or guardians of a child and were asked whether they were aware of the different portions of the Miranda warning. It also asked if they believed the children under their care understood the same. The online survey was sent out via social media with the survey being conducted on Survey Monkey®. Participants were asked eight questions related to the Miranda warning and two demographic questions. Results to the survey questions were analyzed by a chi square test, and statistical significance was determined by *p value* <0.05 to the related survey questions.

Results showed that there was no significance difference between adult males and females when it came to what they understood regarding their children’s rights. When comparing the difference between men and women and their knowledge of juveniles being given food, water, or rest during an interrogation, there was no statistical difference ($p>0.05$). When comparing men and women with the knowledge that the questioning must stop if the child asks for a parent or lawyer, there was a marginal difference ($p=0.055$). The third hypothesis compared the difference between men and women and their knowledge that a parent does not need to be notified of an interrogation, which also showed no significance ($p>0.05$). The last hypothesis tested was the difference between adults knowing the meaning of “in custody” and what they believed their children understood. There was a significant difference in this hypothesis ($p=.001$). Children not understanding their rights could significantly raise the number of false confessions to crimes they did not commit. False confessions are a serious problem in our justice system, leading to tax dollars being spent on trials and incarcerations that should not happen, and possible lawsuits down the road for missteps taken during the investigation and trials. The findings of this study show that there is a much work still to be done in this field to find a solution to lowering false confessions.

False Confessions, Juveniles, Miranda Warning