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The “Single-Interview” Principle in Cases of Sexual Offences Against Minors in China

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Abstract
Cases of sexual offenses against minors are egregious in nature, and the high incidence of such crimes in recent years has posed severe challenges to judicial practice. In response to practical needs, the“single-interview”principle has emerged. Rooted in judicial practice with Chinese characteristics, this principle nonetheless encounters numerous difficulties in its implementation, particularly with respect to the choice of the prosecutorial–police relationship model and the boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention. Divergent views in practice have resulted in obstacles to effectively obtaining statements and protecting minor victims through this principle. Starting from the normative foundations of the“single-interview”principle, this article analyzes the practical deficiencies in the choice of prosecutorial–police relationship models and the boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention in practice. On this basis, it clarifies the grounds for selecting an appropriate prosecutorial–police relationship model, proposes directions for practical optimization, delineates the applicable boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention, and offers a clear and feasible outlook for future development.

Keywords: single-interview principle; prosecutorial–police relations; early intervention

1.Introduction

Minors represent the future of the nation and the hope of its people, bearing upon the fundamental and long-term objectives of national rejuvenation. In recent years, crimes involving sexual offenses against minors in China have shown a high-incidence trend. Such crimes are egregious in nature, seriously infringe upon the rights and interests of minors, and undermine the special protection owed to them. According to the White Paper on Juvenile Prosecution Work (2024) issued by the Supreme People’s Procuratorate, in 2024 procuratorial organs nationwide approved the arrest of 57,156 individuals for crimes infringing upon minors and initiated public prosecutions against 74,476 individuals, representing year-on-year increases of 7.3% and 11%, respectively. Among these cases, crimes such as rape, molestation of children, and forcible indecency and insult accounted for as much as 54.8% of all prosecutions involving offences against minors, posing severe challenges to judicial handling. In response to practical demands, the“single-interview”principle for cases involving sexual offences against minors has emerged, embedded within the“one-stop”case-handling and assistance mechanism. Its core lies in adhering to a single interview as a principle when questioning minor victims in such cases, thereby minimizing repeated interviews that may cause secondary psychological or physical harm. The“one-stop”case-handling and assistance mechanism integrates interviewing, assistance, and protection for

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minor victims, grounded in judicial procedures with Chinese characteristics. The "single-interview" principle within this mechanism constitutes a legal guidance design with distinct Chinese features. It not only aligns with the international principle of acting in the best interests of the child but also responds to China's practical needs in juvenile judicial protection, reflecting unique Chinese wisdom in this field. Unlike many foreign jurisdictions where judges predominantly lead interviews[i], China allows procuratorial organs to participate in police interviews of minor victims through early intervention in investigation[ii], emphasizing the division of labor and cooperation between procuratorial and police authorities. Through coordinated efforts, this approach effectively addresses the professional challenges inherent in handling cases of sexual offences against minors, ensures that the institutional advantages of China's prosecutorial–police system are fully realized, upholds the principle of acting in the best interests of minors, and promotes procedural efficiency.

Nevertheless, the implementation of this idealized legal guidance in practice has encountered numerous complex difficulties, particularly regarding the choice of prosecutorial–police relationship models and the resulting boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention. Although there are explicit normative provisions concerning early intervention, issues such as specific cooperative models between procuratorial and police authorities remain unclear[iii]. Which prosecutorial–police relationship model should be adopted? How can the police's fact-finding function be balanced with the procuratorate's supervisory role in safeguarding the best interests of minors? How should early prosecutorial intervention be properly implemented in accordance with legal norms? The three traditional models of prosecutorial–police relations each have their own strengths and weaknesses, and different choices have been made in practice, resulting in the absence of a unified paradigm for the application of the"single-interview"principle. The lack of clarity regarding the boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention further exacerbates the difficulty of obtaining statements from minor victims and affects the quality of such statements. Against this background, this article first reviews the normative framework governing the application of the"single-interview"principle, then provides an in-depth analysis of the practical deficiencies in the choice of prosecutorial–police relationship models and the boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention. And on this basis clarifies the foundations for selecting an appropriate case-handling model, proposes directions for optimization, and offers clear normative guidance on the applicable boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention, with a view toward achieving a feasible future outlook for the "single-interview" principle in cases of sexual offenses against minors.

2.Normative Foundations of the "Single-Interview" Principle in Cases of Sexual Offences Against Minors

The "single-interview" principle constitutes the core of the one-stop case-handling model for cases involving sexual offences against minors. It refers to the requirement that judicial authorities, when handling such cases, conduct the interview of the minor victim as far as possible in a single session, in a dedicated setting and through a gentle manner, so as to avoid secondary physical or psychological harm caused by re-

i Under the German Code of Criminal Procedure, the presiding judge may directly deprive a person who abuses the right of examination and may dismiss questions that are inappropriate or irrelevant to the case. See German Code of Criminal Procedure (1987), Arts. 239, 240, and 241.;Under French law, judges may carry out all investigative acts they consider conducive to ascertaining the truth and may order a range of protective measures, such as medical examinations. See French Code of Criminal Procedure (2026), Arts. 81 and 82.

ii 《Guidelines for Juvenile Criminal Procuratorial Work (Trial)》; 《Opinions of the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Strengthening Juvenile Procuratorial Work in the New Era》; 《Development Plan for Procuratorial Work during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period》

iii Wang, X.S., Xu,D. Liu, H., et al. (2019). Summary of the Expert Demonstration Meeting on the "One-Stop" Case-Handling Model for Minor Victims. Juvenile Delinquency Issues, 3, p.116.

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peated questioning. The specific application of the "single-interview" principle and the early intervention of procuratorial organs are supported by relevant laws and regulations.

2.1.Normative Bases for the Practical Application of the "Single-Interview" Principle

Relevant Chinese laws and judicial interpretations provide normative support for the application of the "single-interview" principle. In March 2017, the Supreme People's Procuratorate issued the Guidelines on Juvenile Criminal Prosecution Work (Trial), which explicitly provide that interviews of minor victims shall adhere to the principle of conducting a single interview as far as possible, in order to avoid secondary harm caused by repeated questioning. The Opinions of the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Strengthening Juvenile Prosecution Work in the New Era (2020) further proposed the continuous advancement of the one-stop case-handling mechanism. In 2023, the Interpretation on Several Issues Concerning the Application of Law in Handling Criminal Cases of Rape and Indecent Assault against Minors clarified detailed standards for offences such as rape, sexual assault of young girls, and molestation of children, emphasizing strict punishment for crimes involving sexual offences against minors. The issuance of the Opinions on Handling Criminal Cases of Sexual Offences against Minors (hereinafter referred to as the "Opinions on Sexual Offences") further comprehensively provided for the establishment of one-stop evidence collection venues, adherence to the single-interview principle, and the establishment of one-stop case-handling and assistance mechanisms.

Based on the above legal norms and judicial interpretations, the normative foundations of the "single-interview" principle may be summarized as follows. With respect to the interview process: first, interviews shall adhere to the principle of a single interview, avoiding repeated questioning. Instruments such as the Rules of Criminal Procedure of the People's Procuratorates, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors, and the Opinions on Sexual Offences all emphasize the completion of interviews in a single session as far as possible. Second, interview language shall be adapted to minors' cognitive and comprehension abilities. Third, interview methods suitable for minors shall be adopted. The Guidelines on Juvenile Criminal Prosecution Work (Trial) provide specific guidance on participation in interviews and modes of questioning, explicitly requiring interviewers to listen patiently and avoid formulaic question-and-answer evidence-gathering methods. With respect to interview procedures: first, interviews shall be conducted in dedicated institutions or venues. The Opinions on Sexual Offences emphasize that interviews shall be conducted in one-stop evidence collection venues or other environments where minor victims feel safe. Second, a legal representative or another appropriate adult shall be present. Third, synchronized audio and video recording measures shall be adopted. Fourth, interviews shall, as far as possible, be conducted by female staff members. Relevant laws and regulations, including the Provisions on the Handling of Criminal Cases Involving Minors by the People's Procuratorates, the Law on the Protection of Minors, the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China, the Rules of Criminal Procedure of the People's Procuratorates, and the Opinions on Sexual Offences, all explicitly require that female staff members be present when interviewing female minor victims, that legal representatives or other appropriate adults be notified to be present, and that minors' privacy and judicial assistance obligations be duly protected.

2.2.Judicial Bases for Intervention under the "Single-Interview" Principle

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First, the normative foundation with Chinese characteristics. Prosecutorial early intervention constitutes the key to the judicial application of prosecutorial–police relations under the "single-interview" principle. It embodies the basic criminal procedural principle of "division of responsibilities, mutual cooperation, and mutual restraint,"[i] and possesses distinctive Chinese characteristics supported by clear, principled legal provisions. Article 130 of the Guidelines on Juvenile Criminal Prosecution Work (Trial) provides that procuratorial organs may participate in police interviews of minor victims through early intervention in investigation. The Development Plan for Procuratorial Work during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period and the Opinions of the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Strengthening Juvenile Prosecution Work in the New Era also emphasize early intervention when interviewing minor victims. Compared with models in which judges directly lead interviews, China's mechanism of prosecutorial early intervention under the "single-interview" principle conforms to national conditions in practice. It not only respects the professional investigative functions of public security organs and serves the procedural interest of discovering the truth, but also enables procuratorial organs to exercise both guidance and supervisory functions, thereby achieving integrated protection of minor victims throughout the entire case-handling process and implementing the principle of the best interests of the child.

Second, the foundation in judicial practice. Exploration of early intervention under the prosecutorial–police relationship model of the "single-interview" principle has already accumulated substantial practical experience in China. One of the Ten Typical Cases of the Fourth National Selection of Cases on the Protection of Women's and Children's Rights Released by the All-China Women's Federation highlights the advantages of prosecutorial early intervention. In order to avoid secondary harm to child victims, the procuratorial organ played a guiding role by cooperating with public security organs to conduct one-stop evidence-collection questioning. Subsequently, for the purpose of procedural protection of the minor victim, professional social workers were engaged as appropriate adults, lawyers were appointed by the judicial administration authority as litigation representatives, psychological counselors were supervised to provide psychological counseling, and coordination was carried out with civil affairs and community management departments to ensure proper placement.[ii] Huai'an City in Jiangsu Province issued the Several Provisions on One-Stop Evidence Collection Work for Minor Victims in Criminal Cases, requiring public security organs to notify juvenile prosecution departments simultaneously upon case acceptance, thereby achieving full coverage of early intervention in such cases. Under the leadership of the local procuratorial organs in applying the one-stop interview mechanism, secondary harm to victims in cases involving sexual offenses against minors has been minimized to the greatest extent, and public security organs and courts have been encouraged to establish specialized teams for handling cases involving minors, thus forming new case-handling mechanisms.[iii] Local practices have thus conducted preliminary explorations of prosecutorial early intervention, achieving notable results compared with traditional models and gradually laying a practical foundation for the application of the "single-interview" principle.

i Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China, Art. 7.

ii All-China Women's Federation. The Fourth Round of the Top Ten Typical Cases on the Law-Based Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women and Children. China CPPCC Net.http://www.cppcc.gov.cn/

iii Wang, Y., Zhang, S.H, & Han, X.J. (2017). Huai'an, Jiangsu: "One-Stop" Case-Handling and Assistance to Strengthen the Protection of Minor Victims:Procuratorial Daily.https://www.spp.gov.cn/dfjcdt/201712/t20171213_206665.shtml

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3.Practical Foundations of the "Single-Interview" Principle in Cases of Sexual Offences Against Minors

As the key institutional guarantee for the implementation of the "single-interview" principle, the prosecutorial–police relationship has become a focal point of both academic and practical inquiry. Early intervention by procuratorial organs and guidance of police investigations are conducive to the timely and comprehensive collection of evidence, while simultaneously enabling legal supervision and the realization of special protection for minors. Depending on differences in power allocation and interaction mechanisms, prosecutorial–police relations are generally categorized into three models. Each model entails distinct advantages and disadvantages with respect to prosecutorial early intervention. In recent years, local practices have adopted divergent models under the "single-interview" principle, and the boundaries of prosecutorial early intervention have not yet been fully explored, leaving notable practical deficiencies.

3.1.Classification and Analysis of Prosecutorial–Police Relationship Models under the "single-interview" Principle

The integrated prosecutorial–police model emphasizes the concentration of power in procuratorial organs and their leadership over investigations.Its core proposition is to vest investigatory leadership in procuratorial organs, such that public security organs are no longer institutionally independent from procuratorial organs, but instead are subject to their supervision and function as auxiliary bodies, with investigative activities directed and commanded by procuratorial organs. Proponents of this model argue that, as public prosecution authorities, procuratorial organs possess a clearer understanding of evident standards, and that procuratorial leadership over investigations can maximize the one-time, comprehensive collection of evidence, enhance prosecution efficiency, and avoid mutual buck-passing. Many jurisdictions underscore the central role of prosecutors: in France, prosecutors may direct all judicial police activities[i]; in Germany, prosecutors are empowered to conduct investigations in any form[ii]. Consequently, this model was once strongly advocated in China[iii], with procuratorial organs expected to fully exercise command authority[iv] and serve as the primary drivers of the "single-interview" principle. While the positive significance of this model cannot be denied, China's public security and procuratorial organs are institutionally separate, lacking the structural foundation for full integration. Such an approach may also impede the investigative capacities that public security organs are institutionally positioned to exercise, thereby contravening the procedural interest of discovering the truth.

The investigation–prosecution cooperation model emphasizes coordination and equal collaboration between procuratorial organs and public security organs at the same institutional level. Under this model, procuratorial and public security organs cooperate closely on an equal footing as prosecution and investigation bodies, respectively, forming a coordinated prosecution front. This model takes into account the distinct professional advantages of procuratorial and police authorities: public security organs are adept at techni-

i French Code of Criminal Procedure (2020), Article 75.

ii German Code of Criminal Procedure (Strafprozessordnung, 1987), Section 161.

iii Chen, W.D. (2015). Transformation and Reform: Theory and Practice of China's Procuratorial System, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, pp. 257-259.

iv Divided into general authority and specific authority, corresponding respectively to the prosecutor's oversight over the judiciary police in general matters and in particular cases. See Peng, B. (2002). On the Nature of Procuratorial Power and the Theory of "Procuratorial–Police Integration". Contemporary Law Review, 8, p.146-147.

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cal investigation and the collection of testimonial evidence, while procuratorial organs are more attuned to evidentiary standards and the linkage between evidence and prosecution.Equal cooperation is expected to achieve complementary advantages while maintaining appropriate institutional tension and improving procedural efficiency.However, driven by the imperative of uncovering factual truth, police authorities may still conduct multiple interviews to reinforce victims' statements[i], rendering this model less conducive to the precise implementation of the "single-interview" principle.

The prosecutorial-guided investigation model emphasizes the guiding and supervisory role of procuratorial organs without undermining the investigatory primacy of public security organs.Its essence lies in timely prosecutorial intervention to guide police investigation and evidence collection while exercising legal supervision, without displacing the police's primary investigative role. This model is advocated by the majority of scholars[ii], as it aligns closely with the three core purposes of the investigative stage of criminal procedure: collecting evidence, preparing for public prosecution, regulating investigative power, and safeguarding citizens' rights[iii].The "single-interview" principle embodies two core values.First, uncovering factual truth—early prosecutorial intervention ensures that victim statements meet evidentiary standards from the outset; second, special protection for minors—prosecutorial supervision guides appropriate interview methods and procedures, preventing secondary harm during investigation.

3.2.Practical Selection of Prosecutorial–Police Relationship Models

In early local explorations, many jurisdictions initially attempted to adopt the integrated prosecutorial–police model.During the preliminary pilot phase of Shanghai's implementation of the one-stop case-handling and assistance mechanism for cases involving sexual offenses against minors, procuratorial organs led the establishment of specialized inter-agency mechanisms and one-stop case-handling venues.[iv] In Chengdu's Longquanyi District, the juvenile one-stop case-handling and assistance center was spearheaded by the procuratorate, coordinating multiple agencies.[v]Although such prosecutorial-led approaches were widely adopted at the outset, continued practice gradually revealed inherent problems. Given China's national conditions, institutional separation between police and procuratorial organs remains necessary.Excessive concentration of authority in procuratorial organs may suppress the investigative initiative of public security organs and foster a tendency toward prosecutorial centralization of power.Moreover, procuratorial organs generally lack investigative technical expertise, Comprehensive command over police investigations risks creating situations in which non-specialists direct specialists,making potentially inefficient.The investigation–prosecution cooperation model has been less frequently adopted in practice. This model continued to emphasize parallel division of responsibilities, with public security organs independently conducting questioning and procuratorial organs refraining from direct involvement, offering opinions only through pre-interview communication or post-interview review, and cooperating within their respective statutory powers

i Yan, Z.H. (2013). A Study on the Exclusion of Repeated Confessions. Modern Law Science, 2, p.125.

ii Shi, B.Y., Liu, T., & Huang, C.F.. (2024). On the Review and Improvement of Early Intervention Practices in Cases of Sexual Offenses Against Minors: From the Perspective of Constructing a New Prosecutorial–Police Relationship. Journal of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Studies, 6,p. 93.;Liu, Y., & Xu, Y. (2019). The Use of Evidence in Cases of Sexual Offenses Against Minors: From the Perspective of the "One-Stop" Evidence Collection Model. Journal of China Criminal Police University, 6,p. 59.

iii Bian, J.L. (2005). On the Optimization of Prosecutorial–Police Relations in China's Investigative Procedure: Centered on a Functional Analysis of the System. Journal of the National Prosecutors College, 3,p. 59-61.

iv Fan, R.Q., Zhong, Y., Yao, Q.N., et al. (2017). On the Construction of a "One-Stop" Protection System for Minor Victims in Sexual Offense Cases: Evidence from Shanghai's Practical Exploration. Juvenile Delinquency Issues, 2,p. 41.

v Chengdu People's Procuratorate. (2024). One-Stop Completion of Investigation and Evidence Collection: This Center Effectively Safeguards the Lawful Rights and Interests of Minors.https://www.cdjcy.gov.cn/cjxw/280782.jhtml

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to complete evidence fixation.In essence, however, investigation and prosecution are inherently interconnected stages of criminal procedure, requiring each authority to exercise its functions independently runs counter to the inherent logic of procedural stages[i].

By contrast, the prosecutorial-guided investigation model has become increasingly prevalent in the implementation of the "single-interview" principle. The Supreme People's Procuratorate's handling of the Zhao Moumou child molestation case[ii] reflected a clear tendency toward prosecutorial guidance, with procurators intervening early to guide police in conducting interviews at one-stop facilities. Similarly, the handling of the Zhao case involving rape and indecent assault against a child by the Daoli District in Harbin under a special protection mechanism reflects the prosecutorial-guided investigation model[iii]. In that case, the procuratorial organ promptly intervened at an early stage to guide evidence collection, formulated a tailored questioning plan based on the specific circumstances of the victim, and urged public security organs to complete questioning and physical examinations in a single session. In current practice, the "single-interview" principle is predominantly implemented through a model in which procuratorial organs provide guidance and public security organs carry out questioning. Investigative authorities typically prioritize the resolution of factual truth in cases and may naturally pay less attention to, or possess less expertise in, prosecutorial standards. Timely guidance by procuratorial organs at the outset of investigations, grounded in legal and prosecutorial awareness, can redirect investigative authorities away from an overemphasis on evidence collection at the expense of minors' privacy protection.This model effectively reconciles the dual objectives of fact-finding and special protection for minors. Early prosecutorial guidance helps ensure that evidence meets prosecutorial standards while avoiding supplementary investigations that may cause secondary harm, thereby safeguarding minor victims' legitimate rights.

3.3.Practical Deficiencies in the Boundaries of Prosecutorial Early Intervention

Despite the effectiveness of the prosecutorial-guided investigation model, widespread adoption has revealed unresolved issues regarding the concrete application of early intervention. Key questions persist: when should intervention occur? By what means should it be exercised? To what extent may procuratorial organs intervene? Existing laws and regulations provide no unified standards, resulting in fragmented practice. Tensions arise when police, driven by fact-finding imperatives, conduct additional interviews that undermine the "single-interview" principle.

First, the timing of intervention remains unclear. In practice, procuratorial intervention may occur upon receipt of a report, after case filing, or following criminal detention. Empirical research suggests that intervention prior to formal case filing most effectively enhances the quality of statements obtained through a single interview. [iv]Delayed intervention risks missing optimal opportunities for coordinated guidance and may even lead to the downgrading of cases due to the absence of specialized guidance.In the Yang case involving indecent assault against a child in Tengchong[v], public security organs initially treated the matter

i Chen, W.D., & Hao, Y.Z. (1999). A Study on the Investigative–Procuratorial Integration Model: With a Discussion on the Necessity of Reforming China's Criminal Justice System. Chinese Journal of Law, 1,P. 61.

ii Supreme People's Procuratorate. (2017). Typical Cases (Matters) on the Comprehensive Judicial Protection of Minors by Procuratorial Organs.https://www.spp.gov.cn/spp/zdgz/201712/t20171228_207766.shtml

iii Zhang, Y., & Yan, J.N. (2018). Heilongjiang Harbin Daoli District: Handling a Case of Sexual Offenses Against a Minor Through the Application of a Special Protection Mechanism. Procuratorial Daily.https://www.spp.gov.cn/spp/zdgz/201807/t20180716_384906.shtml

iv Zheng, Z.H., & Peng, Zhongmin. (2025). The Hierarchical Structuring and Mechanism Improvement of Cooperation Between Public Security Organs and Procuratorial Organs in Criminal Procedure. Chinese Procurators, 7,P. 38.

v China.com. (2025). Suspect in the Sexual Assault of a Young Girl Sentenced; Procuratorial Organs Supervise Case Filing.https://news.china.com/socialgd/10000169/20250922/48847272.html

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as an administrative case and imposed a fifteen-day administrative detention. The procuratorial organ intervened only after the victim's parents applied for filing supervision, resulting in delayed intervention and inadequate punishment of the perpetrator, and causing serious physical and psychological harm to the minor victim.Second, modes of intervention vary. Intervention may take the form of on-site participation or written guidance. On-site intervention enables real-time supervision and adjustment of interview focus[i], as well as prompt correction of improper conduct.Whereas written intervention respects investigative independence but may neglect the integrated nature of prosecution and investigation. Given the sensitivity of sexual offence cases involving minors, on-site guidance and supervision are often indispensable.Third, the scope of intervention authority remains ambiguous. From the perspective of discovering the truth and respecting the investigatory primacy of public security organs, procuratorial intervention should be confined to guidance on evidentiary standards and legal supervision, without interference in specific investigative actions or direct conduct of questioning. Conversely,from a child-protection perspective, broader intervention authority may be justified. Early pilot programs in Shanghai experimented with procuratorial leadership in coordinating interviews, medical examinations, and psychological counseling[ii] to maximize the effectiveness of the "single-interview" principle.

4.Future Prospects for the "Single-Interview" Principle in Cases of Sexual Offences Against Minors

In the judicial application of the "single-interview" principle, the choice of the prosecutorial–police relationship model and the role of early intervention by procuratorial organs are of central importance. In light of ongoing academic debate and practical inconsistency, and in the absence of explicit statutory guidance, this section proposes constructive approaches to optimizing model selection, practical implementation, and delineation of intervention boundaries, with a view to achieving integrated protection and assistance for minor victims.

4.1.Optimizing the Foundational Orientation of Case-Handling Models

The prosecutorial-guided investigation model constitutes the optimal foundational choice. Practice has demonstrated that the prosecutorial-guided investigation model best accommodates the implementation of the "single-interview" principle in cases involving sexual offences against minors, reconciling fact-finding requirements with the imperative of special protection. This model respects the professional expertise and technical competence of investigative personnel while allowing procuratorial organs to exercise their legal advantages in supporting investigative activities. Police retain their core status as investigative authorities, while procuratorial guidance shifts investigative focus from an exclusive emphasis on fact-finding and evidence collection toward heightened attention to the special protection of minor victims and the safeguarding of their interests.First, guidance should be precisely targeted at the interview stage. The questioning of minor victims constitutes the core procedural stage in which the "single-interview" principle operates and its protective function is realized. Procuratorial organs should adhere to the principle of special protection for

i Zhou, X. (2020). A Dual Examination of Prosecutorial Guidance of Investigation and Paths for Reform. Science of Law (Journal of Northwest University of Political Science and Law), 2,P. 126.

ii Fan, R.Q., Zhong, Y., Yao, Q.N., et al. (2017). On the Construction of a "One-Stop" Protection System for Minor Victims in Sexual Offense Cases: Evidence from Shanghai's Practical Exploration. Juvenile Delinquency Issues, 2,P. 41.

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minors by assessing the victim's age, psychological and physical condition, and case-specific circumstances, and by integrating prosecutorial evidentiary requirements to guide investigative personnel in clearly delineating the scope, methods, and key points of questioning. While respecting police expertise, procurators may communicate in real time through technical means such as observation rooms or communication devices, adjusting interview strategies without directly questioning the victim.This approach maximizes the evidentiary collection capabilities of investigative authorities while enabling procuratorial supervision and guidance to effectively protect the lawful rights and interests of minor victims.Second, prosecutorial guidance should enhance investigators' professional awareness of minor protection. Another significant factor contributing to difficulties in obtaining complete statements from minor victims lies in the lack of professional expertise among interviewing personnel.Inadequate interviewer training, inappropriate questioning methods[i], insufficient preparation[ii], and repeated interviews[iii] exacerbate secondary harm. Procuratorial organs should take the lead in coordinating access to professional psychological resources and in providing regular training for personnel handling special cases, ensuring that investigators are equipped with knowledge of child psychology, psychological intervention skills, and specialized questioning techniques, and are capable of handling cases involving sexual offenses against minors. Procuratorial organs may also disseminate accumulated experience from juvenile prosecution departments or establish multidisciplinary teams of child psychology experts to provide ongoing guidance and supervision, thereby further improving the professional standards of questioning.

4.2.Practical Optimization of the "Single-Interview" Principle

The effective protection of minor victims through the "single-interview" principle cannot be achieved by any single judicial authority acting alone. At present, the implementation of this principle in China continues to face challenges arising from insufficient interdepartmental coordination and inconsistent mechanisms.[iv]It is therefore necessary, under the guidance and supervision of procuratorial organs, to clarify the respective responsibilities of relevant actors at different procedural stages and to establish coordinated cooperation among judicial authorities, government departments, and social organizations. Through the development of cross-sectoral collaboration mechanisms and the enhancement of social support systems, a comprehensive, integrated network for the prevention, protection, and assistance of minor victims can be formed.

Prior to questioning, precise preparatory measures should be undertaken to strengthen the front-end protection of minors' rights.First, Interview venues should be separate from interrogation areas and designed to foster safety and trust, preferably within medical facilities to enable immediate assistance. Reference may be made to the specialized service venues established under Taipei City's one-stop service model for sexual offense cases in Taiwan, where multidisciplinary teams composed of police, social services, and medical professionals provide centralized, full-process assistance, [v]thereby maximizing emotional stability and mini-

i Ma, Z.H.. (2005). Investigative Interviews with Female Victims in Sexual Offense Cases. Journal of People's Public Security University of China (Social Sciences Edition), 5,p.78.;Fang, B. (2013). On Communication Techniques in Investigative Questioning: Centered on Witnesses and Victims. Chinese Journal of Criminal Law, 1,p. 77.

ii Song, X.S. (2023). Evidence Collection Issues in Cases of Sexual Offenses Against Minors from the Perspective of Comprehensive Judicial Protection. Chinese Procurators, 20,p.21.;Wang, H., & Jia, M. (2014). Practical Dilemmas in Punishing Crimes of Sexual Offenses Against Minors and Institutional Transformation. Journal of Law Application, 8, p.92.

iii Jin, Y., & Ye, C.C. (2022). Exploring the Role of Psychological Assistance in "One-Stop" Interviews in Cases of Sexual Offenses Against Minors. Journal of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Studies, 6,p. 93.

iv Zhang, H.Y., & Wang, Y. (2019). Evidence Guidelines for Handling Cases of Sexual Offenses Against Minors. Juvenile Delinquency Issues, 4,p. 21-27.

v Guo, Z.Q., & Lin, Y.H. (2018). Improving the Judicial Protection System for Minor Victims of Sexual Offenses: Insights from Taipei City's "One-Stop Service for Sexual Offense Cases" in Taiwan. People's Procuratorial Monthly, 14,p. 39.

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mizing secondary harm to minor victims.Second, professional support should be engaged prior to questioning. Professional support should intervene prior to interviews, with social workers and psychologists assessing victims' readiness for interview and substituting appropriate adults when legal guardians pose conflicts. During and after interviews, assistance and protection should be continuously implemented. First, attention should be paid to the timely provision of assistance. Professional protection for minors should not be limited to the post-questioning stage. Psychological experts should, without interfering in questioning, monitor the victim's mental state in real time. Where emotional distress or unfitness for continued questioning arises, questioning should be suspended immediately and medical or psychological assistance provided until the victim is able to proceed. Throughout this process, procuratorial organs should fully exercise their supervisory functions to ensure that external interference is excluded and that the authenticity of statements is preserved.Second, follow-up protection after questioning should be ensured.Post-interview follow-up protection, including counseling and social reintegration support, remains essential. Following the completion of questioning, procuratorial organs should continue to exercise supervisory authority to ensure coordinated follow-up by public security organs, judicial social workers, educational authorities, and social organizations, facilitating the recovery of the victim's physical and psychological well-being and supporting their reintegration into daily life. The provision of judicial assistance funds constitutes a significant protective measure.According to the Supreme People's Procuratorate, in 2024 procuratorial organs provided judicial assistance to over 16,000 minors, distributing approximately RMB 170 million in assistance funds.[i]

4.3.Clarifying the Boundaries of Prosecutorial Early Intervention

Stage-based boundaries should be established by using the questioning process as an analytical axis for delineating the depth of procuratorial intervention.At the preparatory stage prior to the first questioning, procuratorial organs should enjoy comprehensive guidance authority.After case filing and before the initial questioning, procuratorial organs may organize interdepartmental coordination with relevant agencies and social organizations to ascertain the victim's background and, based on considerations of evidentiary completeness, communicate targeted evidentiary requirements to investigative authorities.At the questioning implementation stage, procuratorial organs should exercise on-site guidance and supervisory authority, while public security organs retain primary authority over the conduct of questioning. Procuratorial personnel may observe the questioning process in real time through one-way observation facilities and, in consultation with on-site experts, issue timely suspensions or corrective suggestions in response to improper conduct, whether orally or in writing. However, procuratorial organs must not directly conduct questioning or replace investigative personnel in implementing interviews.At the post-questioning stage, procuratorial organs should, based on their supervisory functions, exercise ex post review authority and provide guidance for follow-up assistance to minor victims. After questioning, procuratorial organs should propose remedial measures for evidentiary deficiencies, and issue corrective opinions regarding unlawful evidence collection. At the same time, they should guide and supervise relevant departments in ensuring the continued provision of assistance and protection until the victim has demonstrably returned to a stable state of daily life.

In addition, list-based boundaries should be clarified through the formulation of responsibility and authority inventories.Firstly,Procuratorial organs should not replace police in conducting interviews, interfere with

i Supreme People's Procuratorate, White Paper on Juvenile Prosecution Work (2024), available on the official website of the Supreme People's Procuratorate. https://www.spp.gov.cn/

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investigative strategies, or direct unnecessary privacy-infringing questions. Secondly, procurators may develop evidence collection guidelines for sexual offence cases involving minors, facilitating rapid alignment between police and prosecutorial requirements. Finally, on-site intervention by procuratorial organs need not be mandated in all cases; in light of practical realities, procuratorial guidance and supervision of integrated protection measures before, during, and after questioning may also be effectively achieved without physical presence at the interview venue.

5.Conclusion

The rising incidence of sexual offences against minors underscores the critical importance of effectively implementing the "single-interview" principle. Among the existing three prosecutorial–police relationship models, the prosecutorial-guided investigation model best reconciles the dual imperatives of special protection for minors and factual truth-finding. This model preserves the investigatory primacy and professional advantages of public security organs while enabling procuratorial organs to exercise their comparative strengths in evidentiary standards, legal supervision, and the protection of minors' rights. At the same time, the expansion of early intervention practices has exposed deficiencies arising from the lack of clear normative guidance regarding the timing, manner, and scope of procuratorial intervention. In response, this article proposes a stage-based and list-based approach to clarifying the boundaries of early intervention, using the questioning process as the central analytical axis. By distinguishing between preparatory, implementation, and post-questioning stages, and by clearly enumerating permissible and impermissible forms of intervention, it is possible to achieve a balance between effective guidance and respect for investigative autonomy, thereby better carrying forward Chinese wisdom,minimizing secondary harm and advancing integrated protection for minor victims.

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