

NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



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Dear Colleague,

The NEARI Training Center is pleased to announce two new online courses for the NEARI online training center. These online offerings are a cost-effective way for individuals to earn Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) and for agencies to provide ongoing training opportunities to new and experienced staff. We have expanded our course offerings to include:

- **[First Responders: Responding to Sexual Assault Disclosures](#)** (2 CEUs) authored by the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center. This online course provides essential information for colleges and universities to respond to sexual violence.
- **[Current Practice for Treating Adolescents Who Have Sexually Abused](#)** (4 CEUs) by David Prescott. This online course contains an excellent overview of treatment issues for professionals working with sexually abusive adolescents.

If you want to see a sample, visit our website at www.neari.com/trainingcenter. Please contact us directly with any questions.

Sincerely,
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis
www.neari.com

Featured Website



The Council of State Governments recently released a resolution in opposition of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) as it applies to juvenile

Current Research Casts Doubt on the Effectiveness of Registering Youth

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

The Issue

Recently, the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) has mandated long-term registration for some youth convicted of sex offenses. In many states, these laws are being applied to juveniles as well as adults. Many question whether these laws actually reduce the risk for sexual re-offense by adolescents.

The Research

Elizabeth Letourneau and Kevin Armstrong undertook the first study to test whether registration corresponds to higher or lower rates of sexual and nonsexual re-offense in the juvenile population. They examined 111 pairs of registered and unregistered adolescents matched in areas such as age at offense, year of offense, race, prior crimes against people, and prior crimes not directly involving other people (e.g., property offenses). Despite a follow-up period averaging 4.3 years, there were only two instances of sexual re-offense. This makes any meaningful comparison within this sample impossible. However, registered youth were more likely to accrue new nonsexual convictions. The authors were unable to explain whether this resulted from a genuine increase in crime or an overall increase in surveillance of registered adolescents.

The authors also describe three other studies examining registered and unregistered adult sexual offenders. They note that none of these studies showed that registration reduces sexual re-offending, and that only one of the studies showed that registration resulted in more rapid arrest of those who did re-offend. However, because this is the first study of its kind with adolescents, it is essential that further research replicate these findings.

Implications for Professionals

Professionals should avoid recommending registration for juveniles. There is no credible evidence that registration and notification reduces sexual offending. There are reasons to believe that it can make community re-integration more difficult (e.g., alienation from others, decreased opportunities for healthy and pro-social activities that might otherwise reduce risk).

Professionals can be helpful by communicating what we know and don't know to others. Professionals have an obligation to learn what the research says about evidence based practice and then take this information to key decision makers such as lawmakers and judges. The decision makers can take then the current state of our knowledge into account when forming recommendations.

Although treatment can help reduce the likelihood of future sexual harm, the rate of sexual re-offense is lower than many believe. Out of 222 individuals, there were only two instances of sexual re-offense in this study. Professionals should remember that current policies register many adolescents (at considerable expense) who will not go on to re-offend sexually.

Implications for the Field

...ity do it apply to juvenile offenders. This Act is also known as the Adam Walsh Act. The resolution eloquently describes why adolescents should not be swept up in the same rules and regulations that apply to adults. For a copy of the resolution, please contact NEARI directly or go to the Council's website at:

<http://csg-web.csg.org/policy/pubsafety/documents/CSGResolutionOpposingSORNA.pdf>

Next Month

NEARI eNEWS will look at the importance of engaging families in treatment by Jo Schladale.

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About the Author: David S. Prescott, LICSW



[David Prescott website](#)

A nationally recognized expert in the field of sexual abuse assessment, treatment, management, and prevention, Mr. Prescott has published numerous articles and authored, edited, and co-edited books on risk assessment, interviewing, and providing residential treatment to youth. He is the President of ATSA and is currently the Clinical Director at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake, Minnesota.

It is likely that short-term efforts to reduce sexual abuse (e.g., treatment) are more effective than long-term efforts such as registration. Letourneau and Armstrong's study is part of a larger body of research showing that attempts to get tough on crime without a solid grounding in research do not work. There is a great deal of research which shows that treatment can help young people build healthier lives and safer communities.

Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effects of South Carolina's comprehensive registration policy on recidivism of juveniles who sexually offend. Registered and nonregistered male youth are matched on year of index offense, age at index offense, race, prior person offenses, prior nonperson offenses, and type of index sexual offense, for a total of 111 matched pairs. Recidivism is assessed across a mean 4.3-year follow-up (SD = 2.5). The sexual offense reconviction rate is too low (2 events) to support between-group analyses. Cox regression results indicate no significant between-group differences with respect to new nonsexual person offense convictions but significant between-group differences with respect to new nonperson offense convictions. Specifically, registered youth are more likely than nonregistered youth to have new nonperson offense convictions across follow-up. Public policy implications of these findings are discussed.

Reference

- Letourneau EJ, Armstrong KS. Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, Vol. 20, No. 4, 393-408 (2008).

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Questions/Feedback

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