

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 more we look to find the essential research that each practitioner should know, the more we realize just how little research is available for those working with children and adolescents with problematic sexual behaviors. The research in this month's issue is essential reading for all of us who provide treatment services: we need to address all of the mental health issues affecting an adolescent if we hope to protect future victims and help that teenager grow into a healthy adult.

Not only must we address a growing list of issues when treating adolescents, but we must find the best approaches for this diagnostically diverse population. Towards that goal, NEARI is publishing *Current Applications*, coming out next month. This book takes some of the most innovative thinking in the field and provides practical approaches for use in your clinical practice. If you find these newsletters helpful, you will find this new volume a catalyst to new thinking in your own work.

Do Psychiatric Conditions Contribute to Recidivism?

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

The Issue

Professionals working with adolescents who sexually abuse often reflect upon the many co-occurring psychiatric disorders these kids have. Given the complexity of these cases, what is the most effective way to address these concerns in treatment? How should professionals understand the impact of gender differences when confronting such complex cases?

The Research

This research study was selected because so few studies examine how psychiatric disorders contribute to criminal re-offense. Larken McReynolds et.al. found that mental health conditions elevate risk and included one of the first small but significant samples of adolescent females.

Larkin McReynolds and her colleagues examined 991 adolescents who were formally referred to probation authorities in Texas. This included 791 males and 200 females. Almost half of the adolescents experienced a psychiatric disorder. 20% had an anxiety disorder, 10% had an affective disorder (such as depression or bipolar disorder), 20% had a disruptive behavior disorder, and 25% had a disorder related to drugs and alcohol for both males and females. When these drug and alcohol problems combined with disruptive behavior, the chances of re-offense doubled. However, females experiencing affective disorders who also have drug and alcohol problems re-offended at 4 times the rate of those with neither diagnosis.

Implications for Professionals

Treating mental health needs has a direct affect on re-offense risk.

As always, we welcome your feedback. And if you want us to explore a particular issue in an upcoming newsletter, please let us know.

Sincerely,
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

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NEARI RESOURCES

Publications from NEARI



**Current Applications:
Strategies for Working with
Sexually Aggressive Youth
and Youth with Sexual
Behavior Problems**

by (Editors) Robert E. Longo and
David S. Prescott

In this new volume, Prescott and Longo take the theory and science addressed in **Current Perspectives** and translates it into useful information for clinical practice. With the belief that a good book should be like attending a great three-day conference, the editors have assembled diverse

These findings show that there is a direct link between mental health issues and continued involvement with the legal system. When working with this population, a full assessment of an adolescent's mental health needs is essential to giving that teen the treatment tools they need to change their behaviors.

Males and females differ in their treatment needs. This study clearly shows that we cannot make assumptions about the treatment needs of adolescent females based on what we know about adolescent males. For example, while proper assessment and treatment of affective disorders is vital for all adolescents, they are particularly important in efforts to help adolescent girls become successful young women. These findings should further serve as a wake-up call to those considering research possibilities. Our field needs more information about treating the growing number of adolescent girls entering into the legal system.

Implications for the Field

Adolescents entering the juvenile justice system should have access to adequate mental health assessments and treatment. If we want assurance of better outcomes, these findings point to the importance of broad mental health treatment for adolescents entering the legal system. The authors suggest that their findings may actually underestimate this importance because many of the adolescents who did not re-offend in the study did receive some treatment for their mental health issues.

It is vital to consider substance abuse in both assessment and treatment. In our haste to prevent sexual re-offense, it can be easy to overlook substance abuse issues--this most obvious treatment need. These findings demonstrate that substance abuse treatment must be a part of our overall treatment efforts.

Reference

- McReynolds, L.S., Schwalbe, C.S., & Wasserman, G.A. (2010). The contribution of psychiatric disorder to juvenile recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 37, 204-216.

Abstract

Youths formally referred to probation authorities in Texas (791 male, 200 female) self-administered a structured diagnostic interview at intake. Data on demographics, offense characteristics, and re-offending (within 12 months of baseline) were extracted from official justice records. Logistic regression analyses were used to evaluate the contribution of diagnosis to recidivism, adjusting for demographic and offense characteristics. Baseline externalizing disorders were associated with increased recidivism risk for *both* genders, whereas youths' recidivism risk was not influenced by anxiety disorder. Girls with co-morbid substance use and affective disorder were nearly four times more likely to re-offend than girls with no disorder. In contrast, among males, this disorder profile was associated with only

perspectives from nationally recognized leaders as well as rising stars in the field. **Current Applications** addresses practical topics related to every day clinical practice with young people who have sexual behavior problems, from making meaningful connections in treatment to building on the strengths of young people. The book goes beyond traditional sex abuse specific treatment approaches into new areas that will engage all aspects of the adolescent's development and his or her environment. Topics include working with developmentally delayed youth, building on client strengths, brain-based interventions, art therapy, considerations in using the polygraph, public policy, working through client resistance, and many others.

For more information, click the image of the book or go to the NEARI Press website at <http://bookstore.nearipress.org/>.

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approximately half the level of recidivism risk. Results substantiate practice guidelines that recommend comprehensive mental health assessment in juvenile justice settings and identify youths with certain mental health needs who might be well served by diversion programs.

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FEATURED WEBSITE

Male Survivor

www.malesurvivor.org

Thanks for your suggestions and for noticing that last month's newsletter should have featured the website of Male Survivor. This internationally recognized organization is committed to preventing, healing, and eliminating all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men through support, treatment, research, education, advocacy, and activism. They have also forwarded this request to pass along to you, our reader:

MaleSurvivor is committed to assisting survivors heal no matter where they might be...even in prison. Would you help by sending any used or new materials regarding healing survivors and/or perpetrators to: NCCF, Attn: Chaplain Kathy Williams, 1000 Van Nuys Road, New Castle, IN 47362.

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.

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