

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,

This month's research provides insights from a study of adolescents and children that covers 7 years of data from one state's child protection agency. The authors looked at the effectiveness of using the J-SOAP-II with these populations and found some surprising results. What is most encouraging to our work is confirmation that dynamic factors can have a strong influence on a child's or adolescent's success. Therefore identifying the dynamic scales can provide strong indicators for treatment/system interventions.

We hope that this article and the NEARI resources we highlight below will provide you with some thought-provoking materials about how to work with children and teens in today's environment.

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

Sincerely,

Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

New Findings on Risk Assessment with Children and Adolescents

by David S. Prescott, Steven Bengis, and Joan Tabachnick

The Question

Can the Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol-II (JSOAP-II) be used to predict re-offense and/or inform treatment decisions for adolescent and pre-adolescent boys? What is the best use of this instrument?

The Research

Most studies of risk assessment measures exclusively rely upon criminal justice populations. Robert Prentky, Nien Chen-Li, Sue Righthand, Ann Schuler, Deborah Cavanaugh, and Austin Lee gained unusual access to extensive data from adolescent and pre-adolescent boys under the care of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (a child protective service agency). They used this extensive database to test a well-established adolescent risk assessment tool, the JSOAP-II, to adolescents and pre-adolescents. The JSOAP-II uses scales of static (historical) variables and two scales of dynamic (changeable) variables to assess risk of sexual and other illegal behavior.

The researchers confirmed that:

1. The JSOAP-II should not be used with either pre-adolescents or adolescents to predict long-term trends and that children should be reassessed every six months;
2. Dynamic factors can have a strong influence on outcomes and the outcomes on the dynamic scales can provide strong indicators for treatment/system interventions.



FEATURED NEARI RESOURCES

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



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

With the belief that a good book should be like attending a great three-day conference, the editors have assembled diverse 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.

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

Some of the findings are surprising. The researchers discovered that the re-offense rates of adolescents mirrored the results of other studies (14-16%). However, pre-adolescents engaged in additional inappropriate acts at a rate of 25-28%, which is significantly higher than other studies have found.

Implications for Professionals

This groundbreaking research provides essential information to any practitioner considering using this assessment tool to identify the best options for treatment, supervision, and safety planning. Professionals should not utilize the JSOAP-II for long-term predictions of risk because for this age group, the dynamic factors included within the treatment intervention will influence a child/youth's trajectory and can change rapidly. This research indicates that the JSOAP-II can have strong short-term predictive validity when used with a pre-adolescent population, particularly using both the static scales that explore (1) Sexual Drive/Sexual Preoccupation; and (2) Impulsive, Antisocial Behavior; and the dynamic scales exploring (3) Clinical Intervention; and (4) Community Stability. The dynamic scales of this instrument are invaluable when designing risk management interventions. The same level of short-term predictive validity was not found with the adolescent population, and the authors are quick to acknowledge the mixed findings of other studies. Although this study focused primarily on predictive validity, the JSOAP-II remains one of a small handful of tools for developing a comprehensive treatment plan.

Implications for the Field

It is essential to differentiate children and adolescents from adults, especially when public policy is demanding assessments of re-offense risk. In these younger populations, many dynamic risk factors can change the outcome for these children and adolescents. This study also laid out some new information about making a clear distinction between adolescents and children as well. However, given the results of this study, it is equally erroneous to minimize their risks, and thereby lose the opportunity to design an effective treatment plan. This is particularly important since so many of these children/youth end up in foster care and residential treatment where they are in close proximity to other children.

Reference

- Prentky, R.A., Li, N-C., Righthand, S., Schuler, A., Cavanaugh, D., & Lee, A.F. (2010). Assessing risk of sexually abusive behavior among youth in a child welfare sample. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 28, 24-45.

Abstract

Statutory management of juvenile sexual offenders demands reliable, valid methods for assessing the risk posed by these

ISBN: 978-1-929657-43-8
Catalog Number: 9885
Cost: \$99.00 + S&H

Online Workshop

[Current Practice for Treating Adolescents Who Have Sexually Abused](#)

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

Nationally recognized for his training programs, books, and articles on treating youth who have sexually abused, David Prescott's course is for anyone who wants to understand these adolescents' complex and diverse treatment needs. The course reviews what we know and don't know about this population, places it in the context of their development, and describes the key elements of effective treatment. If you ever plan to refer an adolescent to specialized treatment or want to get current on the most recent research regarding their treatment, this course is an essential building block to your work.

For more information, go to the NEARI Training Center website at <http://training-center.neari.com/training-center/>.

Continuing Education
Credits: 4
Duration: 3-4 hours
Cost: \$45.00

[View Sample](#)

youth. This study examined the predictive validity of the J-SOAP-II using samples of adolescent and pre-adolescent boys who were wards of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. The base rate for sexual recidivism among the adolescents (14-16%) is generally in line with what has been reported. The equivalent base rate for the pre-adolescents (25-28%), however, was notably higher. Although the J-SOAP-II was developed for adolescents, the scale also worked with the pre-adolescents in predicting sexual recidivism over 7 years, with AUC values of 0.77, 0.74, 0.77, and 0.80 for Scales 1, 3, 4, and Total among the pre-adolescents and AUC values of 0.80, 0.82, and 0.83 for Scales 1, 4, and Total among the adolescents. Discussion focuses on extant J-SOAP research and sample dependent variability as well as social policy implications.

To print a pdf of this article, click [NEARI NEWS](#).

Featured Website

The Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol-II (J-SOAP-II)

<http://www.csom.org/pubs/JSOAP.pdf>

The Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol-II (J-SOAP-II) is a checklist whose purpose is to aid in the systematic review of risk factors that have been identified in the professional literature as being associated with sexual and criminal offending.

It is designed to be used with boys in the age range of 12 to 18 who have been adjudicated for sexual offenses, as well as nonadjudicated youths with a history of sexually coercive behavior.

Please note that the JSOAP-II is available for *free*.

About the Editor:
David S. Prescott, LICSW

[David Prescott website](#)

An internationally 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 a Past President of ATSA and is currently Clinical Director for the Becket Programs of Maine, overseeing inpatient and outpatient services for juveniles.

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