

Workshop #13
THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2009 – Session 3 (3:30-5:00)

**JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS: STRATEGIES IN PROSECUTION AND
COMMUNITY DISPOSITION – NEW YORK CITY**

Presenter

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Audience

Pertains to adolescent sex offenders and children with sexual behavior problems that face delinquency prosecution in the family courts of New York City (all 5 boroughs)

Level

Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced

Workshop Summary

Identifying the appropriate level of care and treatment for adolescent offenders and working effectively with treatment providers is critical to long term community safety.

Learning Objectives

- 1) Participants will have a greater understanding of the operation of the family court system.
- 2) Participants will have a better understanding of how to work within the confines of the court system to bring about successful management of these offenders in the community.

Workshop Narrative

Narrative: Prosecuting sex crimes committed by adolescents and children poses a variety of challenges for prosecutors. These challenges can include:

- the same rules of evidence as adult/criminal court,
- the same burden of proof (beyond a reasonable doubt),
- lengthy delays in the court process,
- very young witnesses,
- a general lack of corroborating evidence.

Disposition issues are equally challenging. Juvenile justice professionals and treatment providers appear to lack a common understanding of typologies, risk assessment, and appropriate treatment methodologies. This lack of information, combined with other system barriers and legal impediments can lead to disposition challenges including:

- judges that are reluctant to stigmatize offenders by sending them to sex offender treatment,
- incomplete information provided to treatment providers, i.e., multiple victims, multiple acts, use of grooming behaviors and coercion,
- confidentiality issues, and
- popular community programs that step outside their area of expertise to accept sex offenders.

In our experience, addressing these prosecution and disposition challenges involves multidisciplinary trainings, effective plea negotiations, cross examination of community program professionals who are going outside their area of expertise, and offering treatment providers as expert witnesses at disposition hearings. Through the use of lecture and group discussion, this workshop will explore strategies to increase the knowledge base of juvenile justice professionals regarding this population, to increase treatment providers' understanding of the juvenile court system, to enhance communication between justice system professionals and treatment providers, and to bring accurate, evidence-based information into the courtroom.