

## **Alliance and NYSATSA Present Awards**

The Alliance and NYSATSA tenth annual conference was held in White Plains on May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

The conference luncheon is highlighted annually by the presentation of awards to individual and agency service providers in the field. The Fay Honey Knopp Award is named after one of the national pioneers of in the field of sexual offender treatment. This year the award was presented behind the Capital District Center for Sex Offender Management program. This program has been successful in joining together the resources of three rural counties to provide much needed evaluation, treatment and case management services to sexual offenders in the three county catchment area. Readers of this publication may recall that the Alliance and NYSATSA have been active in assisting in establishing the Capital District Sex Offender Management program. The Marilyn Etcheverry Award is presented to those individuals and agencies that provide innovative and state of the art services to sex offenders. The individual winner this year is Candace Cleveland. Candace has been a driving force in Stueben County for the past fifteen years. She has provided state of the art evaluation and treatment services, advocated for victims and appropriate levels of treatment and supervision for offenders. Candace has also spread her knowledge to other systems involved with these populations and individuals new to the field. Her reach and professionalism were so profound that one of her nominations for this award came from a District Attorney.

This year's Conference was another success. Over 215 professionals who provide services to victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse throughout NY State gathered for two days in White Plains gaining new information and exchanging ideas and experiences with their colleagues. An introduction to the conference was provided by Rocco Pozzi, Commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Probation and Correction that highlighted his county's efforts to contain sexual offending and underlined the importance of doing this work. The first Keynote Speaker was Robert McGrath, M.A., Director, of the Vermont Treatment Program for Sexual Abusers, Vermont Department of Corrections. Mr. McGrath shared volumes of information from his research and many years working in the field. In his discussion on "What do we know about what works in Sex Offender management," Mr. McGrath expounded on the virtues of teaching social skills of varying types to offenders as a means of enabling them to stop their offending behaviors. For example, Mr. McGrath described how an offender can role-play in group what to say to an employer to inform the employer of his status as an offender. Mr. McGrath was followed by the Honorable Andrew Spano, Westchester County Executive. Mr. Spano gave a vivid description of the struggles faced trying to protect the community from sexual abuse. Mr. Spano also gave backing to the concept of lifetime parole and probation for convicted sexual offenders. James Worling, Ph.D. of the SAFE-T Program, Thistletown Regional Center for Children and Adolescents was the keynote speaker on the second day of the conference. Dr. Worling reviewed the different types of evaluations that are performed on individuals who commit sexual offenses. He compared and contrasted different assessment approaches including "unstructured clinical assessment," empirically guided clinical assessment," "actuarial assessment," and the "adjusted actuarial tool." Dr. Worling pointed out that there are currently no actuarial

type of assessments available for evaluating juveniles who commit sexual offenses, and gave caution to using such devices on juveniles. Dr. Worling also spoke of his own assessment instrument, the ERASOR, an empirically guided clinical assessment. A wealth of afternoon workshops was offered on both days, with plenty of handouts and valuable information being given to participants.

Please encourage your colleagues in the field to join the Alliance!

## **Save the Date**

New York State Alliance of Sex Offender Service Providers and New York State Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders present the Annual State Conference, May 11 – 12, 2006

Radisson Hotel, Corning, Corning New York. For many years these conferences have been a prime source for presentations of the latest research findings and practice guidelines while providing an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues in the field. Corning is a delightful town that provides excellent dining and sightseeing opportunities.

Web Site: [www.nysatsa.com](http://www.nysatsa.com)

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

***Annual State Conference, May 11-12, 2006, Corning, New York***

### **Proposals due by February 1, 2006**

The annual New York State ATSA and Alliance conference focuses on bringing the latest information on the management, treatment and research in the field related to sex offender behavior. Conference participants include law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, treatment providers, child protective caseworkers, corrections, parole and probation officers, etc.

We are seeking proposals for **2 to 3** hour workshop presentations that will provide participants with increased knowledge and skills in the management and treatment of sex offenders. Papers are expected to present best practice for children, adolescents and adults. Presenters of workshop sessions are entitled to a waiver of one day's registration fee for the conference. (Maximum of two)

## **ATSA News**

There is a great deal of change and growth underway on the national level for the Association for Treatment of Sexual Abusers. Readers enrolled in the Alliance may want to consider joining this national organization, especially after considering recent changes and new directions being outlined.

According to David Prescott and Ray Knight, “State Chapters have complained for years that the requirement of membership in ATSA as a prerequisite for membership in the State Chapter has imposed the significant limitations on chapters' efforts of networking and education. Membership costs have been seen as exorbitant for those who wished only to become involved at the state level. The Board has finally addressed this concern by creating an Affiliate Membership category with substantial reduction in dues directly intended to address these concerns.” Although the New York State Chapter has kept dues relatively low, the price of belonging to the national organization has increased substantially over the past few years. Because one must currently belong to the national ATSA organization before belonging to the statewide chapter, the cost of being involved may be preventing individuals from joining our statewide chapter. (Fortunately, we have the Alliance in this state to bring together those individuals who do not belong to ATSA, but gather to promote the containment of sexual abuse in our communities.) It will be interesting to see how this direction affects our membership in the future.

The ATSA Membership Committee has also been working to make their application forms more meaningful and efficient overall, and to reduce some of the problems that new applicants experience. The Committee is “considering expanding options for applicants in areas such as letters of reference and demonstrating good standing in the field.”

The ATSA Board also “approved the development of a mentoring program that will provide connections between ATSA's newer and more experienced members. This will create multiple opportunities for all members interested in participating and will facilitate the establishment of mentoring relationships.” This newsletter will make every effort to inform readers of this interesting movement as it develops. It might also promote discussion as to how we can do this within our own statewide organizations.

The ATSA Board “is moving closer to realistic options for increasing our focus on and effectiveness in helping to influence public policy. With the recent changes in laws in various jurisdictions, this has become a matter of acute urgency. Although ATSA cannot afford to pursue all of the avenues it would like, we can no longer afford to respond reflexively and slowly to important public policy developments. The Board unanimously charged the Public Policy Committee with designing a plan that we can discuss further at our teleconference in July. Specific consideration of our international membership will be included.”

You can view the ATSA website at: <http://atsa.com/>

## **Girls' Delinquency**

Although female sexual offenders, especially juveniles, are only a fraction of the typical service provider's caseload, they raise numerous questions and face a paucity of available services. For example, most if not all, juvenile and adult sexual offender risk assessment scales are developed using a population of males. Comparatively speaking, there has been little research in the area of female juvenile delinquency in general.

Fortunately, there is something new on the horizon that may start to address these issues. A Girls Study Group project has been developed by RTI International to further the field's understanding of female juvenile offending and also to identify effective strategies to prevent and reduce female involvement in delinquency and violence. According to the developers of the program, "The Girls Study Group encourages the involvement of researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and others who are interested in the issue of girls' delinquency." A website has been developed to further grow this endeavor. There is information on the Girls Study Group web site describing the issue of girls' delinquency and containing information and resources for finding more information. The STUDY section of the Girls Study Group web site describes the research activities that will be carried out over the course of the project. For more information, the site can be accessed at this web address: <http://girlsstudygroup.rti.org/>

## **Portable Guides to Investigating Child Abuse**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention offers a series of booklets to assist service providers in various aspects of working with child abuse victims and cases. OJJDP reports that it has developed these booklets "In response to requests from law enforcement jurisdictions across the United States for guidelines on investigating child abuse and neglect, OJJDP developed a series of Portable Guides to Investigating Child Abuse. The Office has recently reprinted three titles in the series: *Interviewing Child Witnesses and Victims of Sexual Abuse*, *Criminal Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse*, and *Recognizing When a Child's Injury or Illness Is Caused by Abuse*. In all, there are currently 13 Guides in the series, each addressing a specific aspect of investigating a suspected case of child abuse or neglect. Written by recognized experts, the Guides present fundamental information in straightforward, uncomplicated language. The Guides are compact (5 by 9 inches), for easy storage in the glove compartment of a police cruiser, and concise (16 to 24 pages), for quick reference. Each Guide includes a list of supplemental readings and contact information for organizations that offer training or resources." For a complete list of the Guides, go to: <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/publications/PubResults.asp>

## **National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth**

<http://www.ncsby.org/index.htm>

An interesting site with valuable information is being operated by the "National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth." (NCSBY) The national committee supporting this endeavor includes John Hunter, Ph.D., Robert Longo, MRC, William Murphy, Ph.D. and other experts in the field. According to its website, "The overall goal of the National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth is to provide information and support through national training and technical assistance to improve the accuracy, accessibility, and strategic use of information about the nature, incidence, prevalence, treatment, re-entry, and management of children with sexual behavior problems and adolescent sex offenders." Publications include fact sheets, selected readings for adolescent sex offenders and children with sexual behavior problems and various treatment manuals for

both adolescents and children with sexual behavior problems. There are links to Juvenile Risk Assessment sites, including the JSOAP 2 and ERASOR.

According to the website, “The NCSBY is a part of the Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (CCAN) at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC). CCAN was established in the Department of Pediatrics at the OUHSC in 1992. The purpose of CCAN is to organize the Health Sciences Center's efforts in the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect. CCAN is a university-based center that directs research, professional and public education, clinical services, and administrative programs in the field of child maltreatment.”

## **Juvenile Mental Health Assessments**

The American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center in conjunction with the Juvenile Law Center and Youth Law Center have published an article entitled, ***“MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM: How to Get High-Quality Evaluations and What to Do With Them in Court.”*** Lourdes M. Rosado edited the paper. This report is the third of six training modules completed to assist professionals in providing relevant training to the courts and other agencies that work with juveniles. The other five modules include: “Kids Are Different: How Knowledge of Adolescent Development Theory”; “Talking to Teens in the Justice System: Strategies for Interviewing Adolescent Defendants, Witnesses, and Victims”; The Pathways to Juvenile Violence: How Child Maltreatment and Other Risk Factors Lead Children to Chronically Aggressive Behavior”; “Special Ed Kids in the Justice System: How to Recognize and Treat Young People with Disabilities That Compromise Their Ability to Comprehend, Learn, and Behave”; and “Evaluating Youth Competence in the Justice System.” A multidisciplinary team consisting of mental health professionals, special education experts, juvenile court judges, prosecutors, defenders and others developed the curricula for these training modules.

The goal of the training module being reported on here is “for juvenile court personnel to become better-informed consumers of mental health evaluations.” This is relevant for a number of reasons cited by the authors. There is an appendix section to this training module that gives actual examples of court ordered mental health assessments for juveniles. These can be of practical use for the readers of this newsletter who must submit such reports. Officers of the court can also benefit from reviewing these examples, as they can enable the judge or the probation officer to determine what direction they would like to give to an evaluator who is doing an assessment for the court. There are also small group exercise work sheets that can be utilized when providing training on this module. The appendices can also be used if the reader is providing training in this subject matter.

Several themes are addressed in the module regarding juvenile mental health assessments. The authors note a difference between an “evaluation conducted for therapeutic purposes and one conducted for forensic purposes.” Readers of this

newsletter are most likely familiar with these differences as providers of services to patients who come on a voluntary basis as opposed to those who are referred by the court, probation or an attorney to assist the court in decision making. The authors also note, “The mere presence of a psychological disturbance does not mean that it is related to the legal issue at hand...Most psychological tests were developed for therapeutic purposes and not specifically to be used in forensic contexts; therefore, inferences have to be made about how they apply to the question at hand.” The authors also address issues pertaining to reliability and validity of assessments utilized in this manner.

This training module also addresses the “Legal contexts in which a mental health evaluation may be indicated.” The following areas are identified: Competence to confess/waive Miranda rights; waiver to adult court; competence to proceed; mental state at the time of offense; and disposition /sentencing.” In each of these subject areas factors related to the need for each type of assessment are discussed. The importance of “demystifying” mental health jargon and diagnosis is also discussed, with an emphasis on training about DSM IV and relevant disorders experienced by juveniles. Basic information about psychological assessment and testing is also provided, followed by identification and discussion of the different types of testing often conducted with juveniles. (For example, intelligence testing, emotional and personality functioning tests, etc.) A section of the training module addresses how to ensure developmentally-sensitive mental health assessments, determine to the young person’s competence and examples of questions that a developmentally-sensitive mental health assessment should answer.

Finally, the training module reports how to “think about, request, and review a forensic evaluation, distinguish between therapeutic evaluation and forensic evaluation, pre-evaluation preparation, assessing the evaluator, and post-evaluation review of the evaluation.

The intent of reviewing this module was to provide information and an outline for readers to utilize if they are planning on providing any education and training to officers of the courts. This information would be useful in providing training to various agencies such as mental health clinics, Child Protective Services workers, Probation and Parole Departments, etc. For further information regarding this training module, and the others mentioned in this report, please contact :

ABA JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER/NATIONAL JUVENILE DEFENDER CENTER  
740 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005. 202-662-1515 - Fax: 202-662-1501

## **The Voices and Faces Project**

*The Voices and Faces Project* is a non-profit initiative created to give voice and face to survivors of sexual violence, offering a sense of solidarity and possibility to those who have lived through abuse, while raising awareness of how sexual violence impacts victims, families and communities. The goal of this project is to heighten awareness “through a series of written and photographic portraits of over 50 sexual violence survivors, which will be published as a book, featured on our website and part of a traveling installation that will allow us to reach remote communities, *The Voices and*

*Faces Project* underscores an important theme: that survivors are not just defined by the violence that has been done to them, but by the rich and multi-dimensional lives they are now living.” A Speakers Bureau is also being developed as a part of this project. Rape survivors and advocates will speak publicly to churches, community centers, law enforcement and other organizations. The website contains survivor stories and dispels many of the myths surrounding the act of sexual assault. There also links to other sites and a “reading room” that lists titles of fiction and non-fiction books that are pertinent to the subject.

The Project is accessible through the Web at <http://www.voicesandfaces.org/index.asp> and through a toll free number (1-800-656-HOPE.)

## **The Decline of Child Sexual Abuse Cases**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) announced the availability of "Explanations for the Decline in Child Sexual Abuse Cases." David Finkelhor and Lisa M. Jones wrote this twelve page bulletin.

The decline in sexual abuse cases, as reported by child protective service agencies, could be an encouraging development if future analysis and research establish its significance. The uncertainty about the meaning of this trend, however, underscores how much remains to be accomplished in terms of drawing lessons from past experience to determine future policy.

This Crimes Against Children Bulletin reviews six plausible explanations for the decline in sexual abuse cases in light of available data. These explanations are as follows: “Increasing conservatism within CPS; exclusion of cases that do not involve caretakers; changes in CPS data collection methods; less reporting to CPS due to sexual abuse backlash; a diminishing reservoir of older cases; and a real decline in the incidence of sexual abuse. Regarding this last change the authors state, “...there was a reduction in the number of children actually being abused as a result of increased prevention efforts, more prosecution and incarceration of offenders, or other social or cultural changes.” While acknowledging the likelihood that multiple factors are involved, the authors find evidence of a significant decline in child sexual abuse.

### **Resources:**

"Explanations for the Decline in Child Sexual Abuse Cases" (NCJ 199298) is available online at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/publications/PubAbstract.asp?pubi=11458>

A limited number of printed copies are available from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (JJC). Copies can be ordered online at <http://puborder.ncjrs.org/> or by calling JJC at 800-851-3420. Please use the document number when ordering.

For full-text publications, information on OJJDP or JJC, and other

juvenile justice matters, visit the OJJDP Web site at  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp/>

## **URGENT PUBLIC POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **IMPORTANT - Information Regarding Senate Bill 1086**

(The following announcement was sent to members of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. At press time for this newsletter, the issue had yet to be decided in Congress. The points made in this bulletin are certainly worthy of consideration and may prove useful in future attempts to provide a balance between protecting our communities and sex offender treatment. Editor.)

#### **To all ATSA Members,**

We are writing to update you on ATSA's response to the recently passed House Bill 3132 and the soon to be voted upon Senate Bill 1086. As many of you know, these bills include Lifetime Registration for people convicted of a sex offense. These particular bills include LIFETIME registration for children and adolescents. This past weekend we developed an ad hoc sub-committee of the Public Policy Committee to try and impact the Senate bill. After significant discussion we regretfully concluded that we need to limit our current attempts to impact the bill to the section regarding the lifetime registration for juveniles. The ad hoc committee consists of Ray Knight, Dan Knoepfler, Mark Chaffin, Jill Levenson, Robin McGinnis, and David D'Amora. Please look at the Forum article that will be published this week for greater detail, but for the moment let me outline what we are attempting to do:

1. Contacts with some sister organizations are being made. We will attempt to have a delegation go to D.C. to meet with members of the Judiciary Committee.
2. A Letter to the Editor has been written and will be sent to several major newspapers across the country.
3. This letter is included below and will soon be posted to the ATSA web site. We encourage you to send it to any local newspapers.
4. We encourage you to send the central message of this letter to the members of the judiciary committee. Bullet points are listed below. The members and their email addresses can be found at: <http://judiciary.senate.gov/members.cfm>
5. State Chapters are being contacted and asked to contact Senators from their states. State Chapters whose Senator is on the judiciary committee are being asked to make a special effort to contact their Senator.

#### **THE BULLETS:**

Five important points about juveniles with sexual behavior problems that you can tell your senator or the press:

- At long-term follow-up the vast majority of youth who sexually offend remain free of criminal sexual recidivism. Low sex offense recidivism rates are a consistent finding across five decades of follow-up research comprising over 30 U.S. follow-up studies.



- As many as 1/3 of sexually abused children will demonstrate some sort of sexual behavior problem, usually transient and minor, in response to their own abuse. In some cases, this behavior may even involve other children or younger children and result in a delinquent adjudication. The motivation and manifestation of these sexually inappropriate behaviors are very different from those of adult offenders and demand a different response.
- Lifetime registration for offenses committed in childhood will result in lifelong stigma and decreased opportunities for education, employment, and healthy relationships. As advocates for sexually abused children, we do not wish to see the added burden of mandatory lifetime public labeling as a "sex offender" added to the stigma of abused children.
- Children with sexual behavior problems generally respond well to treatment interventions. Recent research has found that after short-term cognitive behavioral therapy, children with sexual behavior problems have no greater risk for future sexual offenses than children with other, general behavior problems such as ADHD.
- Children with sexual behavior problems are equally as likely to be future victims of sexual abuse as they are to be future perpetrators.

**Some important points about community notification that you can tell your senator or the press:**

- Sex offenders are a heterogeneous group and represent a wide range of offense patterns and risk levels.
- The US Dept. of Justice has found that sex offense recidivism is much lower than commonly believed, with 5.3% of sex offenders being rearrested for new sex crimes within 3 years of their release. The Canadian government found a 14% rate of recidivism over 4 years post release.
- It is important to remember that recent high-profile cases do not represent the typical sex offender. Sexually motivated abduction and murder are rare events, and such cases should not become the impetus for legislation affecting the heterogeneous group of sexual offenders.
- The vast majority (80-90%) of sexually abused children are molested by a family member or acquaintance known to the child and family, not by strangers.
- There is a persistent myth that treatment cannot help sex offenders, despite research suggesting that treatment reduces recidivism by up to 40%.
- After a decade of implementation, there is no evidence that community notification prevents sexual abuse, reduces recidivism, or protects children.
- Broad notification, which notifies communities equally about all sex offenders regardless of risk, actually dilutes the public's ability to identify those sexual predators who pose the greatest danger.

**Four suggestions for changing the act:**

- Delete the requirement of lifetime registration for juvenile offenders, who are very different from adult sex offenders in both their development and their risk for reoffense.
- Require or at least encourage states to adopt a tiered approach to identifying “high risk” offenders based on empirically-based risk factors, such that aggressive notification and internet disclosure would be reserved for high-risk sex offenders.
- Allow a reasoned process for low-risk offenders to be removed from state and federal registries.
- Adopt a more accurate definition of the term “sexual predator” for the purposes of registration and notification.

On the Net:

National Center for Victims of Crime: [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

Violence Against Women network: [www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center: [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)