

Executive Summary

Course Title: Adolescent Sexual Misbehavior – They are not “mini perps”

Instructor: Niki Delson, LCSW

Course Description:

The modern industrial world created the term adolescence to describe a stage of development when child becomes an entry level adult. Research has provided new information to explain the physical, psychological, social and cognitive development that continues from childhood into the mid 20's. This one day multi-media workshop will combine power point slides, lecture, and video to provide an overview of sexual development in the context of our sexually schizophrenic culture and what we know about children and adolescents who sexually misbehave.

Topics to be covered:.

- Normal sexual behavior and sexual misbehavior in children
- Etiology of sexual behavior problems in children
- Influence of culture and media
- Understanding sexual development in the context of adolescent development
- Brain development and sexual behavior problems
- When does sexual misbehavior portend adult sexual offending
- Relationship between sexual behavior problems and learning problems, pornography, alcohol and drugs
- Distinguishing potential child molesters from rapists in adolescence
- Placement considerations
- Family reunification and safety plans
- Ethical considerations

Target Audience:

This workshop is designed for entry level as well as more seasoned social workers. Supervisor and administrator attendance should be encouraged. There are other professionals participating in the child welfare arena. If there is room, Juvenile probation officers and children's attorneys would be welcomed.

Outcome Objectives for Participants:

As a result of this training participants will:

1. be able to distinguish normal childhood curiosity from sexually concerning behaviors in children
2. recognize the impact that culture plays in shaping adolescent sexual behavior
3. become familiar with cognitive changes in adolescence that give rise to risk taking behaviors
4. be aware of the 'red flags' that require sexual specific interventions as opposed to other therapeutic approaches.

Transfer of learning issues for supervisors

Our culture is asexually schizophrenic. On the one hand we allow non – stop sexual stimulation through the media. On the other hand we are morally panicked about any form of sexual behavior in children. Children are titillated by our uninhibited presentation of sex in the media and then told not to touch. It is in this confusing climate that social workers are told to be the gate keepers of sexual misconduct. Children's sexual behavior is cloaked in the hysteria of our times about child sexual abuse. As a result, CPS workers are often asked to intervene in situations that are developmentally normal with the potential for causing more harm than good.

Even though the media infuses us with sexual images and messages, for many adults talking realistically about sex causes distress. Sexual behavior in general and particularly sexual behavior in children can fill one with apprehension. This workshop is bound to make some workers feel uncomfortable.

Before training supervisors can help workers explore their own feelings, concerns or issues related to children's sexual behavior. What do workers think is normal? What are their cultural expectations about sexual behavior? How do we intervene when pop culture, religion, values and research are at odds? All of us Workers may have predetermined positions regarding many issues that can get in the way of good social work. Worker objectivity may be heightened when they are assisted in distinguishing their own issues in a supervisory session.

After Training:

Supervisors can support social workers by providing an atmosphere that is conducive to exploring ethical issues as well as policy issues. Social workers need to know and be supported in a decision to not intervene (even in the face of public pressure) when there is good reason to believe that it is in the best

Supervisors should be familiar with the research so that they will be able to support the worker in crafting empirically driven decisions.

Brief Outline

Introduction to the day

- Creating the atmosphere for safely talking about sexuality
- Why this is important to CWS
- Short exercise – “What is the lens through which you view sexuality”

Exploring children’s Sexuality

- The ingredients of normal/abnormal sexual behavior
- Historical perspective – “The science of the day”
- Influence of culture
- Public panic
- What do we know about children’s sexual behavior

Etiology of children’s sexual behavior problems

- Continuum of sexual behaviors
- Assessment instruments
- The vampire myth –
- When to get help and what kind of help works

Entering Adolescence

- Developmental changes
- How come intelligent teens do stupid things

Adolescent sexual misbehavior

- Categories of adolescent sexual misbehavior
- When does sexual misbehavior portend adult sexual offending
- Relationship between sexual behavior problems and learning problems, pornography, alcohol and drugs
- Distinguishing potential child molesters from rapists in adolescence

Placement considerations

- Family reunification and safety plans

Ethical considerations