

## Executive Summary

### **Course Title: Non Offending Mothers – The Key to Victim Well Being and Recovery**

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**Introduction:** “Mother Blame” is ubiquitous in psychological literature. We blamed mothers for causing autism – they were called refrigerator moms. We blamed mothers for causing childhood schizophrenia – they were called schizophrenogenic mothers. Psychologists even blamed mothers for their children’s sexual preference, holding mothers culpable for homosexuality.

When child sexual abuse came out of the closet, anecdotal literature blamed mothers. They were referred to as the impaired parent, unable or unwilling to carry out caregiver functions, unwilling to be a sexual “provider” for her partner, and a collaborator in incest. Empirical research does **NOT** support these beliefs. Nonetheless, Child Welfare policy often reinforces them.

**Course Description:** Drawing from decades of research about child molesters and mothers of sexually abused children, this workshop will provide participants with evidence based information grounded in the knowledge that mothers are the key ingredient to the child’s well being and recovery.

#### **Topics to be covered:**

Using power point slides, video, lecture and participant exercises we will address the following issues:

- Mother as the key to the healing of the child
- What the RESEARCH has to say about mothers of sexually abused children
- Mother’s belief, support and protection – on a continuum
- Elements of disclosure associated with belief
- Denial as a process related to grief
- Mothers as victims
  - Prior victimization
  - Victim of their child’s abuser
  - Victim of the system
- Strategies for working with mothers

## **Target Audience:**

This workshop is designed for entry level as well as more seasoned social workers. Supervisors and administrators not familiar with the current research should be encouraged to attend. Participants who have completed the workshop "child Molesters – Dispelling the Myths" will have the advantage of more fully understanding the participation of the abuser in the mothers psychological make up and reaction to disclosure.

## **Objectives for Participants:**

As a result of this training participants will:

1. be able to describe three different types of disclosure
2. become familiar with a continuum of "knowledge" that mothers have about the sexual abuse of their child
3. understand the "cost" of disclosure for the mother
4. Re visit the term "in denial" and understand it as a stage, rather than an event
5. learn strategies for working with mothers ambivalence

## **Brief Outline**

### **Introduction to the day**

- What do we KNOW and what do WE BELIEVE about mothers of sexually abused children

### **Some research about**

- Mothers support and protection
- Relationship with the offender and belief
- Mothers reaction to disclosure
- What mothers know

### **Exploring "Failure to Protect"**

- "Denial" as a normal stage of the process of acceptance
- Using Grief and Loss theory to understand "denial"
- Putting blame where it should be –on the offender

### **Working with Ambivalence**

- Assessing support
- Assessing belief
- Assessing behavioral response
- Developing a plan

### **Mother as a victim**

- Own child sexual abuse
- Battering
- Of her partner's deception

- Of the system

**Treating the child through the mother**

- Helpful worker strategies