Conducting a Thorough Sex Offender Evaluation

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WHY DO A PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION?

• Information
• Differential Diagnosis
• Treatment Planning
• Preparation for Court
• Dangerousness
• Employment Decisions
• Determination of Special Needs
• Determine Strengths/ Weaknesses
• Can client benefit from Insight Oriented Psychotherapy
• Chemical Dependence Problems
• Provide Help and Support

SOME EXAMPLES OF EVALUATIONS
PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE ASKED TO DO:

• Affluent businessman from small town in nearby southern state crossed state line allegedly to have sexual encounter with underage female met online

• Single father accused of chronic pornography use within a custody battle, seeks evaluation before the court will consider his request to have visits with his daughter

• Male arrested for possession of child pornography found to have 1000’s of images of child pornography. Has stayed mainly in his room for the past 10 years.

• Businessman passing through Houston airport en route to east coast accused of exposing himself while awaiting flight
• Female high school teacher charged with ‘Improper Relationship With a Student’

• Career FBI agent arrested for viewing child pornography, and use of government computers to download and view

• Male CEO arrested after he approached an undercover police officer for sex in a Houston park

• Career attorney with large U.S. oil corp. acknowledges long-standing addiction to pornography, now that wife of 30 years is about to leave him

• Middle school teacher found to be viewing pornography on school computer during work hours

• Another middle school teacher found to be viewing pornography on school computer during work hours
MUCH WRITTEN ABOUT SEX OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

• ATSA (2005). Practice Standards and guidelines for the evaluation, treatment, and management of adult male sexual abusers. Beaverton, OR


Not talking about:

• Phallometric Testing
• Risk Assessment Instruments
  • sexual vs. general violence
  • problem of prediction
  • clients often in "lowest" categories
• Polygraph Examination

However, referral to these types of assessments can be very helpful to an evaluation

THE ASSESSMENT – GETTING STARTED

HOW CLIENTS MAY COME IN

• Direct Referral
  • Referred by spouse/partner or self
  • Referred by employer
  • Referred by attorney
  • Referred by another mental health professional
  • May be brought up by one parent or the other in a custody evaluation
HOW CLIENTS MAY COME IN – cont’.

• Referral From Specialized Programs
  • Sexual Abuse Treatment Program
  • Professionals in Crisis Program
  • Focal Evaluation
  • Treatment Provider for Parolees
  • Sexually Violent Predator Program (SVP)

WHAT GOES INTO A THOROUGH ASSESSMENT? - OVERVIEW

• WHERE TO START:
  • Determine Reason for Referral
  • Clinical Interview
  • Sexual History
  • Use of instruments to assess other factors
    • personality, intelligence, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, anger,
      psychopathy, cognitive distortions (“thinking errors”)

Assessment - continued

• Obtain collateral information where possible
  • Referral source
  • Family members
  • Police records
  • Mental health records
  • Attorney
Assessment - continued

• Clinical Interview
  • Ways to conduct
  • Don’t be afraid to ask questions
  • Always ask about pornography use, even if client is a juvenile
    (especially if client is a juvenile)
  • Always ask “Is there anything else you would like me to know about that I haven’t asked?”
  • Managing discomfort – theirs and yours

Basic (but important!) Nuts & Bolts

• Consent
  • Define Psychological Evaluation
  • Risks/ Benefits
• Release of Information
• Who is the Client?
• Schedule of Fees
  • Publish up front
  • Fees for going to court

Example of Assessment Battery

• Clinical Interview
  • Very detailed; usually across 2-3 sessions
• Collateral Interview (in person or by phone)
• Record Review
  • Attorney records
  • Photos/ Videos
• PAI (Personality Assessment Inventory)
• MSI-II (Multiphasic Sex Inventory – 2nd Ed.)
Assessment Battery – cont.

- Beck Depression Inventory – 2nd Edition
- Shipley Institute of Living Scale
- Inventory of Problem Sexual Behaviors, Thoughts and Feelings
- Substance Abuse Subtle Symptom Inventory – 3rd Edition (SASSI-3)
- Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST)

- PCL-R-SV (Psychopathy Checklist – Revised – Screening Version)
- Use of PCL-R-SV vs PCL
- Novaco Anger Scale
- Penn State Worry Questionnaire, or Beck Anxiety Inventory

WRITE THE REPORT, AND THEN….

• PONDER IT
Two Clients – Similarities:

• Male Teacher in a Middle School
• Popular Teacher; Well-liked
• Private School
• Accessing Pornography on School Computer
• Fully cooperative with evaluation
• Married
• No legal history

Some Differences:

• History of pornography use
• Viewing while children in vicinity
• Sexual liaisons outside of primary relationship
• Physical abilities
• Mood state
• Social Support

• Work history
• Remorse; acceptance of responsibility
• Type of pornography accessed
• Downloading of material
• Access to Internet at home
• Substance Use
• Attraction to children
Findings:

- Judgment and Boundaries
- History of pornography use
- Other sexual excesses
- Mood State
- Diagnostic criteria for Pedophilia
- Motivation for therapy ("in God’s hands")

Some Differences in Recommendations:

- Psychotherapy
- Motivation for therapy
- Prognosis
- Social Involvement/ Activities
- Appropriateness around children; "risk" to children
- Continuation with current employment

In Summary:

- Refer out if not qualified
- Make known all office policies, procedures, and fees at the beginning
- Obtain Written Consent
- Don’t promise an unrealistic timeframe
- Take your time
- Interview a collateral person if at all possible
- Review all available collateral information
• Test Battery should not be overly-inclusive, yet thorough and sufficient
• Ponder your report
• Re-read your report
• Re-read your report
• Send a “draft” where appropriate to do so
• Remain accessible and responsible

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