

Use of the  
Multidisciplinary Team  
in the  
Investigation, Assessment and  
Intervention  
of  
Juvenile Sex Offenders

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The average male, adolescent  
sex offender could effect  
**380**  
victims during his lifetime, if not  
treated.

*Abel, G., Mittleman, M. and Baker, J. (1985)*

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Did You Know?

- 90% of offenders are male
- Juvenile sex offenders are between the ages of 5 - 17
- Most commit their first offense prior to age 12
- 90% of offenders know their victim
- Females are three times more likely to be a victim
- Male victims are under reported



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### Did You Know



- 60% of juvenile sex offenses involve an act of penetration
- Physical force is used in over 30% of juvenile sex offenses
- Brother-sister contact may be 5 times as common as father-daughter
- CPS and Law Enforcement are inconsistent in their response to juvenile sex offenses
- Juveniles are less likely to be separated from their victim

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### Did You Know?

- Often, parents put the offender in control of the victim
- In many cases, parents must initiate the criminal process
- Parents are asked to choose between the children
- Parents are responsible for treatment of the offender



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### Differences Between JSO and Adult Sex Offender

- Sexual arousal patterns not as defined as adults
- Not as fixated on single sexual activity
- Less concerned with consequences (real vs. unreal)
- More prone to fantasy activity prior to act

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# Theories of Etiology

aka – why does this happen?

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## Offenders Were Abused Themselves

- Report to the House Subcommittee on Crime, Committee on the Judiciary, 1996
- Looked at 25 studies (23 retrospective and 2 prospective)
- **Conclusion:** Research did not indicate child victims of sexual abuse become offenders

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## Self-Esteem

Poor social skills and low self-esteem can best explain sexual deviance in juveniles.

*The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (1997)*

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## Social Skills

A combination of factors, such as other anti-social behaviors, lack of social skills, a history of non-sexual deviance and maladaptive family relationships may contribute to the first sex offense.

*Becker and Kaplan (1988)*

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## Family

- *Kobayashi et al. (1995)* stated that physical abuse by fathers and sexual abuse by males increased sexual aggression. Bonding with mother appeared to decrease sexual aggression.
- *Kahn and Chambers (1991)* found that only 1/3 of adolescent sex offenders lived with both bio-parents.
- *Miner, Siekert & Ackland (1997)* reported that 60% of offenders' fathers had a C/D histories; 28% had criminal histories.

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## Are They Acting Out What They Have Learned?

- 40-80% (depending on the study) of juvenile offenders report they experienced sexual abuse\*
- 25-50% (depending on the study) of juvenile offenders report being victims of physical abuse\*
- Lack of learned boundaries
- Interaction with another sexualized child
- Exposure to sexually explicit material

\* Becker & Hunter (1997)

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## Are They Acting Out What They Have Learned?

- The Freak'n Internet



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## Other Issues for Juvenile Offenders

- 53% had disruptive behavior histories\*
- 30% had truancy problems\*
- 39% had documented LD's\*
- A connection between ADD and sex offending has not been made
- Role of substance abuse and offending is unclear

\* Kahn and Chambers (1991)

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## The age of a perpetrator should not fool workers

- Don't ignore unusual or aggressive sexual behavior. Nor should less severe behaviors be dismissed. Exposure (flashing), touching over the clothes, obscene, pseudo-mature language, possession of pornography, and "boys-will-be-boys" type coercion can all be signs of an abuser or potential abuser

\* Fehrenbach, P., Smith, W., Monastensky, C., & Deisher, R. (1986). Adolescent sexual offenders: offender and offense characteristics. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 56, 225-233.

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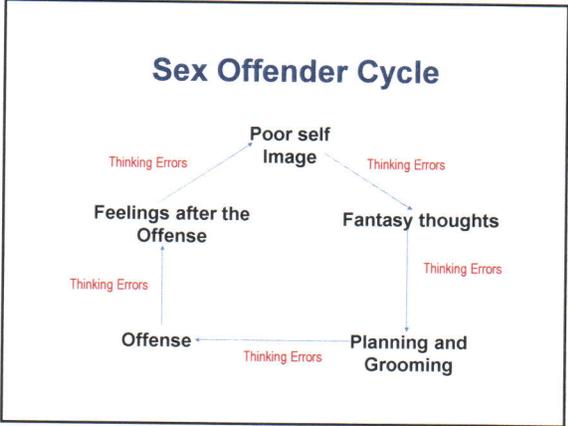
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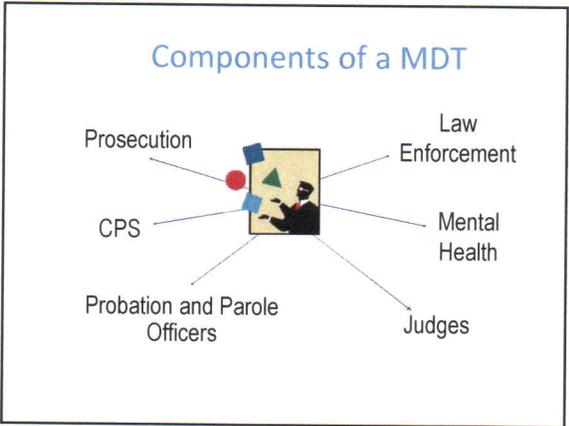
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### Investigating the Juvenile Sex Offender

- Develop a multi-disciplinary response
- **Treat juvenile sex offenses as serious crimes**
- Differentiate between normal and abnormal sexual behavior among children
- Cross-screen for abuse of JSO
- Cross-screen for abuse between siblings

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MDT Should Obtain the Following Information During a JSO Investigation

- **Prior arrest, allegations, and investigations (both sexual and nonsexual)**
- **Number of victims**
  - Gender
  - Relationship to JSO
  - Age in relation to JSO
  - Duration of abuse
- **Identified paraphilias**
- **Level of psychopathology**
- **Cognitive or criminal thinking distortions**

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MDT Should Obtain the Following Information During a JSO Investigation

- **Type of offense**
  - Premeditated or planned
  - Use of force, coercion, weapons
  - Penetration
- **Instrumentality/Verbalization**
  - Used to control
  - Used to manipulate
  - Used to enhance gratification
- **Evidence of compulsivity and arousal patterns**

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MDT Should Obtain the Following Information During a JSO Investigation

- **Grooming behaviors**
  - Positive/negative reinforcement
- **Boundary violations**
- **First time?**

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### Cognitive or Criminal Thinking Distortions

- Justify behavior
- Form of self-deception
- Range from brief thought that one will not get caught, to an elaborate belief system that supports continuing sexually abusive behavior
- Elements in a chain that lead to sexually abusive behavior

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### Accelerants

- Sexually-charged environment
  - Prostitution
  - Pornographers
  - Strippers
- Access to **Internet**
- Access to Pornography
- Phone Sex
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Sex offender within household
- Dogmatic/zealot religious affiliations



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### Accelerants

- Personality disorder/mental illness
- Social isolation with any other accelerants
- Incest socialization
- Professional Wrestling



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### JSO MDT's - Actions

- Apprehend suspects
- Get a confession to as much of the criminal behavior as possible
- Use the Court process to hold the offender accountable
- Resolve the case through disposition
- Use Probation and Parole to supervise JSO's actions in the community

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### Parents of JSO

- Attempt to gain their cooperation
- Torn loyalties
- Important to discuss dynamics with them
- Underscore the importance of treatment

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### Law Enforcement's Role: Investigative Notes

- Understanding the psychology of sex offenders can help the process of apprehending and obtaining a confession
- A sex offender may be much more likely to discuss their feelings and behavior with a "sympathetic" listener

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### Law Enforcement's Role:

- Feeding into offenders distorted beliefs can encourage them to further confess
  - "She was really sexy looking"
  - "She looked older"
  - "It felt good to him"

• Befriend them

• Arrest them



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### THE FOCUS ON PARENTS

- Parents are a key to child's recovery – we see them for an hour a week!
- Parental responses to the trauma are associated with child functioning
- Child placement is often a function of parental response and support
- Possible reunification of family

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### First Step in Treatment



The juvenile sex offender needs to experience being arrested

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### Youth who are charged with sex offenses are amenable to treatment

- Youth are in a transitional and developmental stage in their lives and their sexual offending behavior is not fixed, so juvenile-specific treatment is very promising.
- The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders (ATSO) reports that the significantly lower incidence of sexual aggression, fantasy, and compulsivity among youth than among adult offenders suggests that the sexual behavior problems displayed by juveniles have a better chance of improving with intervention.
- ATSO thus recommends that youth sex offenders be treated through high-quality, juvenile-specific, community-based treatment as an alternative to the adult criminal justice system whenever possible.
- Additionally, ATSO suggests that juveniles should be subjected to community notification procedures in only the most extreme cases.

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### Treatment Issues Require

- Extensive training and experience in child abuse and family violence
- Treatment professionals who specialize in this field
- Coordination of treatment services for victims and their families

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### Treatment Areas

- Sex education
- Correction of cognitive distortions
- Empathy
- Anger management
- Social skills
- Impulse control
- Abusive vs. non-abusive sexual behavior
- Reduction of deviant arousal
- Relapse prevention

*Becker & Hunter (1997) and Hunter & Fugere (1999)*

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## Components of Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment

- Relapse Prevention
- Victim Empathy
- Development/Understanding of Healthy
- Development of Healthy Social Skills Sexual Relationships
- Supervision

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## Why?

- Adolescents can change
- Public safety
- Little offenders will grow up to be **BIG** offenders, if not treated

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