Collaborative, Community Based, Evidence Based Services for Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth

Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth
While sexual exploration and play are a natural part of childhood sexual development, some sexual behaviors indicate more than harmless curiosity.

In cases where these behaviors pose a risk to the safety or well-being of the child and other children in his or her world, it is imperative for families and communities to step in and mitigate through proper identification, treatment, and intervention.

What are Problematic Sexual Behaviors?
Problematic sexual behaviors (PSB) in youth are defined as child or adolescent initiated behaviors typically involving sexual body parts that are:

- Developmentally inappropriate
- Potentially harmful to self or others and/or
- Illegal

Greater than one-third of sexual offenses against child victims are committed by other youth.
Problematic Sexual Behavior primarily occurs with other children known by the youth, with a quarter of victims being family members. Few sexual offenses of youth involve strangers

Qualities of Effective Community Based Programs
Effective community based treatments for youth with problematic sexual behavior, the child victims, and their families have the following characteristics:

- Community collaboration. Juvenile justice, child welfare, treatment services systems, schools, child advocacy centers and others collaborate to identify children with problematic sexual behaviors, assess risk, and engage families in evidence-based treatment;
- Clinical services teams trained in evidence-based treatment.
- Active parent and caregiver involvement. Helping these children and youth requires active engagement of the family; and
- Agency and public policies that are consistent with research outcomes

When accomplished effectively, communities can better sustain the safety, health, and well-being for the children and families in the community.

For more information see the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth: www.ncsby.org
As problematic sexual behavior of youth commonly occur with children within their social network, lack of community collaboration leads to:

- Failing to identify youth in need of services
- Families divided, both physically and emotionally
- Fragmented services
- Risk to the community members

In contrast, community collaboration and implementation of evidence-based services for youth with problematic sexual behaviors, children impacted, and families can lead to:

- Decreased child symptoms (problematic sexual behavior and trauma)
- Increased pro-social behaviors in children and youth
- Decreased parent / family stress
- Improved safety and well-being for child and family
- Sustainable and safe reunification of family members
- Improved placement stability for youth involved in Child Welfare system
- Decreased recidivism for youth involved in juvenile justice
- Decreased costs for placement, services and interventions

Community Decision Making Process

Historically, no individual community-system has responsibility for coordinated care for all youth with problematic sexual behavior. Implementing evidence-based treatment requires service agencies to effectively plan, develop, and enact a community decision-making process related to care and treatment of youth and their families.

Individuals and professional involved in this process:

- Caregivers (Bio/Kinship/Foster/Adoptive Parents)
- Child Protective Services
- Law Enforcement
- Juvenile Justice
  - Judges
  - Prosecutors / Defense
  - Probation
- Victim Advocacy
- Behavioral and Mental Health
- School Personnel
- Medical Providers
- Other Professionals
  - Speech Therapists
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Rehab Specialists
- Faith-Based Communities / Agencies

Community Goals and Outcomes

- Effective and consistent identification of youth and families dealing with problematic sexual behavior
- Effective and consistent referral of identified youth to evidence-based services
- Sustainable implementation of evidence-based services
- Family-centered response to all impacted by the problematic sexual behavior of youth
- Coordinated response across agencies and systems