

Section 2: Overview

Use Slide #1: The Effective Management of Juvenile Sex Offenders in the Community

Introduction

Most of the time, when the term “sex offender” is used, people think of adult men who commit sex offenses. However, it is important to understand that some adolescents engage in sexually abusive behavior as well.

Use Slide #2: Key Topics for This Section

In this section, we are going to take a look at some national data which reveal that juvenile-perpetrated sex offenses are in fact a significant problem. Then we will discuss the ways in which society and the field have responded to these youth over time.

We will then review some of the current literature about these youth and highlight some key similarities and differences between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses. And we will end this section with a brief discussion about how our current knowledge about these youth has implications for our approaches to managing them.

Goals

Before we begin, let’s review the goals and objectives for this section.

At the end of this section of the curriculum, participants will be able to understand:

- What national data tells us about the incidence and prevalence of sex offenses committed by juveniles;
- How the juvenile justice systems’ responses to these cases have evolved over time;
- Critical findings in the current literature about juvenile sex offenders, including key similarities and differences between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses; and
- How what we know about juvenile sex offenders should impact the ways in which we manage them.

Part I: Scope of the Problem

To give you a quick sense for the scope of the problem of juvenile sex offending, we'll take a look at some arrest data for sex crimes. These particular statistics are drawn from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), which is comprised of a range of crime-related data collected annually by the Federal Bureau of Investigation from law enforcement agencies across the country.¹ Among other things, the UCR summarizes arrest data at local, state, and national levels and gives us the opportunity to look at specific types of crimes overall with respect to age, gender, race, and other demographics.

Use Slide #3: Arrest Data

So, based on recent UCR data for youth specifically, it was estimated that over the course of one year there were 4,240 juvenile arrests for forcible rape and 18,300 arrests for other sex offenses.² Considering that these numbers are for youth only, they are pretty striking, aren't they?

Use Slide #4: Arrests by Gender

And of the juvenile arrests for forcible rape, 98% were males; for other sex offenses, 91% of the arrests were males. Based on these data, it seems pretty clear that juvenile males are responsible for the vast majority of these types of cases.

Because of that, the focus of this curriculum is on juvenile males who commit sex offenses. So unless I indicate otherwise, the discussions we have and any data that are shown from this point on refer to adolescent males. This is not at all intended to suggest that the sex offenses committed by adolescent females are not significant. Quite the contrary. We simply have much more information about youthful male sex offenders, and they are much more likely to come to the attention of juvenile justice professionals.

You may be wondering how these youth fit into the overall problem of sex offending. We can get a sense for that by looking at the proportion of juveniles versus adults who are arrested for sex offenses.

Use Slide #5: Arrests: Adults vs. Juveniles

This data indicates that juveniles account for roughly about one-fifth of all arrests for these types of sex crimes.³

What is important to keep in mind is that this data only reflects *arrests*. Many adults and juveniles come to the attention of the authorities but are never actually arrested. And in some circumstances, when individuals are apprehended, other

crimes may have been involved – but the arrest counts only reflect the most serious crime for which the person was arrested, which may not be a sex offense. In addition, as you know, sexual victimization tends to go underreported, for many reasons, so many individuals are never apprehended or arrested in the first place.⁴

Taken together, this means that it is very difficult to know the true extent of the problem of juvenile-perpetrated sex crimes. So when you look at or hear about this kind of data, always try to identify what it is that the data describes – arrest data, victim reports, self-reports, or something else – and know that it is likely to be an underestimate.

Now let's focus in a little bit more on how these cases fit into the juvenile justice system overall. But first, I'd like to ask you a question.

Out of all juvenile arrests or delinquency cases that come to the attention of the juvenile authorities, what percentage do you think are sex offenses?

(ASK AUDIENCE FOR RESPONSES.)

Great – those are all good guesses! Sometimes, people believe that sex offenses represent a fairly high percentage of the cases that come to the attention of the juvenile authorities. But the actual numbers may surprise you.

Use Slide #6: Sex Crimes Versus Other Delinquency

As you can see, arrests for sex offenses represent an extremely small percentage – only about 1 percent – of all juvenile arrests.⁵ Similarly, juvenile sex offense cases account for only about 1 percent of the cases processed by the juvenile courts each year.⁶

Note to Trainers: *The figures above represent national data about the incidence and prevalence of juvenile perpetrated sexual assault. Local trainers should be prepared to speak to their own statewide or local data regarding sexual assault as well as the number or percentages of these cases in their own county or state. Trainers should also be willing to develop slides or material to share with participants about these local data.*

But we cannot interpret these small percentages as meaning that juvenile-perpetrated sex crimes are not an important concern. Remember, sexual victimization is often underreported. In addition, even though these percentages are low, the absolute numbers of juvenile sex offenders and their victims are very significant. It is certainly a problem that needs our attention – we want to do all that we can to prevent additional sex offenses and victims.

Unfortunately, there has not always been sufficient attention paid to sex offenses committed by juveniles. And that issue is a perfect introduction to our next section.

Part II: Historical Responses

As you've seen, the available data certainly indicate that juvenile sex offending is a problem in our communities. But you might be surprised to hear that only fairly recently has it been the focus of much attention. In fact, when we look at historical trends and responses to juvenile sex offenders, it is very interesting to see the changes that have occurred over time.

Although adult-perpetrated sex offenses have been a longstanding concern – with some professionals even writing about sexual deviance in the late 1800s – similar behaviors engaged in by adolescents did not draw nearly as much concern until nearly a full century later.

Why do you think this was the case?

(ALLOW FOR AUDIENCE RESPONSES.)

Yes, those are some good hypotheses. It's hard to know the exact reasons. It may be that misperceptions, societal views, and professional biases are some of the issues that contributed to the lack of attention to juvenile-perpetrated sex offenses.

For example, in some circumstances – and as recently as the 1960s and early 1970s – adolescents' sexual behavior problems were overlooked or minimized because of a belief that these acts were solely experimental or born out of curiosity, or that these behaviors were simply a common "phase" out of which youth would grow. Others may have minimized the seriousness of these types of behaviors and overlooked the potential harm that could be caused simply because of the youths' relatively young ages.

However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the tides began to turn. Why do you think this change occurred?

(ASK AUDIENCE FOR RESPONSES.)

Use Slide #7: Catalysts Fueling Increased Awareness

Well, one reason was related to victimization data. When researchers attempted to explore the incidence and prevalence of sexual victimization through anonymous surveys, a significant number of respondents indicated that a person younger than 18 years of age was responsible for abusing them.⁷

At around the same time, professionals studying and treating adult sex offenders asked them when they first began to engage in sexually abusive behaviors. And it turned out that a considerable proportion of these adult offenders reported that they began perpetrating during their adolescent years.⁸ So an assumption was made that the onset of much sex offending occurs during adolescence.

Although there are probably some other reasons, these two sets of findings seemed to play a large role in the increased recognition of the problem of juvenile-perpetrated sex offenses. And with that increased recognition came an increase in research and professional literature on these youth.

Use Slide #8: Initial Growth in Literature

As you can see, the number of professional publications related to juvenile sex offenders increased dramatically – from less than a dozen articles in the 1970s and early 1980s to nearly six times that amount only a decade later.⁹

Obviously, then, not much was known about these youth when the focus first began to shift toward them. Unlike the large body of research that had accumulated within the adult sex offender field and that could be used to guide interventions for adults, there was very limited empirical information about juvenile sex offenders upon which to base policies and practices.

As a result, much of how systems responded to juvenile sex offenders during the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s was based primarily on common beliefs about – and strategies developed for – adult sex offenders. It was assumed that these youth were essentially the same as their adult counterparts, and that what made sense for adult sex offender management would make sense for juvenile sex offender management.

This is quite interesting, because it is commonly accepted that adolescents are fundamentally different from adults from a developmental perspective!

But at the time, given the limited research about these youth, these unquestioned assumptions about the parallels between adult and juvenile sex offenders were somewhat understandable.

Unfortunately, this trend continued, and developmental considerations were not commonly taken into account as management strategies for sexually abusive youth were developed. And in some ways, the proverbial pendulum swung even further. Whereas sexual behavior problems of adolescents had once been ignored, they had now become the focus of intense scrutiny.

In fact, during the 1990s, the field appeared to be over-correcting – and some experts argued that it went too far in the other direction.¹⁰

 **Use Slide #9: The Field Over-Corrects**

For example, in some instances, non-abusive sexual behaviors exhibited by children and adolescents were being mislabeled as sex crimes. Very young children – sometimes even preadolescents as young as 8 or 9 years old – were being labeled as sex offenders, sexual predators, and pedophiles.

In addition, assessment instruments and treatment interventions intended for adults were being used with juveniles. Similarly, supervision strategies and tools, like polygraph testing and electronic monitoring, and specialized conditions such as prohibited contact with minors, were now being applied to juvenile sex offenders in the same manner in which they had been used with adult sex offenders.

And legislation that was initially geared toward managing adult sex offenders, including registration, community notification, and civil commitment, began to be considered and enacted for youth who committed sex offenses in the mid- to late-1990s.¹¹

The markedly changing way in which professionals and systems responded to juvenile sex offenders may have been – at least in part – a function of the growing public outcry related to several high profile sex offense cases committed by adult sex offenders.

How many of you remember seeing some of those headlines years ago, or continue to see headlines in similar cases even now?

(ALLOW FOR AUDIENCE RESPONSES.)

Yes, those kinds of stories tend to stick in our minds because they were so troubling. Indeed, the very tragic outcomes in these highly publicized cases were seen by some as convincing evidence that all adult sex offenders are extremely dangerous and recidivate at staggering rates. In turn, many presumed that all juvenile sex offenders are very dangerous and reoffend at very high rates as well, and that these youth inevitably become the adult sex offenders of society.

Another contributing factor may have been the widespread reaction to the increased rates of violent juvenile crime that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s – in what has been called a “juvenile crime wave.” During that time, most or all of the states in the country passed sweeping juvenile crime reforms in an attempt to “get tough” on juveniles and to treat them more like adults.¹² When we get to the Treatment section of this training, we’ll talk more about that trend and its implications on juvenile sex offender management.

Regardless of the reasons that drove this dramatic shift in how systems responded to juvenile sex offenders, the movement reflected the belief that these

youth were simply younger, smaller versions of adult sex offenders. And again, many policies and practices were designed around this premise. As you are probably aware, at around the turn of the century, these adult-like approaches became increasingly controversial in the field.¹³

More recently, additional research pertaining to juvenile sex offenders has been conducted, and we have gained a greater understanding of some of the factors that seem to be associated with juvenile sex offending behaviors. In addition, although there are some similarities, we have developed a greater appreciation for the important differences between these youth and adult offenders.

So at this point in time, we have a more informed rationale for putting in place developmentally sensitive approaches to managing juveniles who commit sex offenses.

Part III: Current Research and Literature

As I mentioned a moment ago, the field has advanced in such a way that most professionals no longer believe that it is appropriate to design intervention strategies for juveniles that mirror the approaches used for adults. Again, that is because we know that juvenile sex offenders are not simply younger, smaller versions of adult sex offenders.

Now, this doesn't mean that they don't have any commonalities. In fact, there is no question that some similarities exist between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses.

Use Slide #10: Key Similarities

For example, the sexually abusive behaviors that both adults and juveniles exhibit have the potential to cause considerable harm to the victims they target.

In addition, both adults and juveniles tend to target persons who are known to them, rather than targeting strangers.¹⁴

And because of the underreporting of sexual abuse, it is likely that both adults and juveniles are committing more sex offenses than the official data reflects. In other words, both adult and juvenile sex offenders are likely to be under-detected and under-apprehended.

It is also believed that both adults and juveniles tend to engage in some degree of planning prior to offending, and that the offenses that they commit do not "just happen." Rather, they may think or fantasize about what they want to do in advance, set up situations, or take advantage of opportunities to victimize others.

And along a similar vein, both groups are likely to distort their thinking patterns in a way that allows them to engage in this kind of abusive behavior. In other words, they are generally aware of the wrongfulness of these behaviors, and may even have an understanding of the potential negative impact that these behaviors can have on the victims. However, both adults and juveniles somehow give themselves permission to commit the offense or offenses anyway, and often convince themselves that the behavior is not as serious or harmful. We refer to this as cognitive distortion, and again, both adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses tend to have this in common.


Additionally, both adult and juvenile sex offenders often have some form of self-management, coping skills, and/or social competency deficits.¹⁵ For example, they may have difficulty dealing effectively with their emotions or managing stress or conflict, they may have problems with assertiveness or communication skills, and they may be socially withdrawn or isolated. And their sex offending behaviors may in part be related to some of these kinds of deficits or challenges.

Finally, the research has consistently demonstrated that both adult sex offenders and juvenile sex offenders are diverse and heterogeneous populations.¹⁶ Just as there is no “typical” adult sex offender, there is no “typical” juvenile sex offender. Individuals who commit sex offenses – adults and juveniles alike – come from all walks of life, and have a wide and varying range of risk levels, risk factors, strengths and assets, and intervention needs.

And we need to remember that these youth – as well as adults who commit sex offenses – are not just “sex offenders.” Sexually abusive behaviors are only one aspect of who these individuals are, and we should be cautious about defining them solely in terms of one set of behaviors. Otherwise, we might overlook the other important needs – and strengths – that these youth and adults have.

So, in terms of management strategies, one size certainly does not fit all for either adult or juvenile sex offenders. In other words, sexually abusive adults and juveniles are similar in that they are so diverse!

Now that I’ve highlighted some of the ways in which they are similar, let’s review some of the differences between them. As you’ve heard already, advances in the research and professional literature have increased our understanding of juvenile sex offenders, including some very important differences between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses.¹⁷

 **Use Slide #11: Suggested Differences**

For example, juveniles do not seem as likely as adults to have “fixed” or “exclusive” patterns of deviant sexual interests, preferences, or arousal. What this means is that some adult sex offenders appear to have rather well-established patterns of being particularly interested in or “turned on” sexually by

inappropriate contacts. Being primarily attracted to or focused on young children is a key example, such as adults who are diagnosed with pedophilia. With those adults, deviant sexual interests, arousal patterns, or preferences can be fairly easily identified. With many juvenile sex offenders, this does not appear to be the case. This is in part a function of the period of adolescence, when sexuality is emerging, evolving, and dynamic. So juveniles' sexual interests and preferences may not be fully formed or established yet, and measuring sexual interest or arousal reliably may be more challenging during this developmental period.¹⁸

It is important to be aware of this important difference because deviant sexual arousal and interests are significantly correlated with recidivism for adults.¹⁹ But because these sexual deviancy variables do not seem to be as prevalent among juveniles, it still remains a question as to whether deviant arousal or interests are a driving factor that "cause" juveniles to begin engaging in this behavior in the first place. These factors do, however, seem to be associated with sexual *re-offending* among youth.²⁰ But again, that doesn't mean that most youth have problems in this area, nor does it mean that deviant arousal is a primary reason that most youth commit sex offenses.

Another important difference between juvenile and adult sex offenders that seems to be a function of these youths' developmental status is that of psychopathy. Psychopathy is a construct that is used to describe individuals who show longstanding problematic behavioral patterns and negative character traits that include a parasitic lifestyle, repeatedly lying to and using others, an inability (or unwillingness) to be empathic or remorseful, impulsive behaviors, extreme narcissism, shallow emotions, and superficial charm that tends to hide many of these negative qualities.²¹

As you can imagine, the presence of psychopathy is strongly related to criminal behavior, and it significantly predicts both sexual and violent recidivism among adults.²² It is generally recognized that psychopathy can be reliably identified in adults, but there is debate and controversy about whether or not it is an appropriate construct to be applied to juveniles.²³ Many believe that psychopathic traits and patterns probably begin during adolescence and, of course, some of the defining "traits" are observable in youthful populations.²⁴

At the same time, some of these features, such as impulsivity, unstable emotions, empathy deficits, and narcissism are fairly characteristic of adolescence. So the common presence of these traits in youth clouds the picture, making it more difficult to be certain about the identification of juvenile psychopathy. A juvenile may show some of these characteristics, but they may be fleeting, and they may simply mature and "grow out of" some of these ways of interacting or behaving. And we should be careful about assigning that kind of label prematurely.

Nonetheless, a small subset of adolescents do in fact demonstrate considerable psychopathic traits, and they continue to show these patterns over time – and especially as they enter young adulthood – we are better able to accurately confirm its existence. And researchers who have examined psychopathic traits among youth have found that these characteristics are correlated with violence and aggression.²⁵ Psychopathic traits in juvenile sex offenders specifically have also been found to be correlated with general recidivism.²⁶

The bottom line is that we have no sound reason to believe that psychopathy is as common among juvenile sex offenders as it is with adult sex offenders. Much more research needs to be conducted with respect to psychopathy among youth, including those who commit sex offenses.

Since I've just mentioned impulsivity, let's talk about it in terms of juvenile versus adult sex offenders.

If you look back at your own behaviors as a teenager, or if any of you have or had teenagers of your own, it won't come as much surprise to you that impulsive behaviors are fairly common among adolescents. Adolescents don't always carefully think things through before they act, do they? And they don't always think about the ramifications of their behaviors, do they?

(ALLOW FOR AUDIENCE RESPONSES.)

So, consistent with what we know about adolescents in general, juveniles who commit sex offenses are prone to showing impulsive and opportunistic tendencies as well.

I have another question: Has anyone ever heard a sex offender say that their offense "just happened?"

(ALLOW FOR AUDIENCE RESPONSES.)

That's right. Some sex offenders, at least early on in treatment, will maintain that they didn't really think about, fantasize about, or plan their offenses. But as I mentioned earlier, experts have found that in most instances, people who commit sex offenses do engage in fantasizing, planning, and grooming, and that for some offenders, their offenses follow a fairly predictable pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.²⁷ Certainly, then, it is fairly evident that most sex offenses do not truly "just happen."

However, because they are adolescents, impulsive and opportunistic offending behaviors among sexually abusive youth may in fact be more common, at least in comparison to adult sex offenders.

This does not mean that youthful sex offenders don't plan their offenses, engage in grooming behaviors, or think about or fantasize about these behaviors beforehand. Quite the contrary. It simply means that, much like adolescents in general, youth who commit sex offenses tend to have difficulties with thinking carefully about the consequences of their behaviors before they act. And in some ways, during the period of adolescence, part of that can be a function of brain development.²⁸ For example, the frontal lobe – the part of the brain that is responsible for emotional and behavioral regulation, and for reasoning and problem solving – does not fully mature until adulthood. In addition, brain development can be further impacted by trauma, which can lead to further difficulties with their ability to effectively manage their emotions and behaviors. And we know that emotional and behavioral regulation, reasoning, and problem solving are important for making a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Impulsivity isn't an excuse for their offending behaviors, and it definitely doesn't fully explain why they do what they do. But we need to remember this and other developmental variables when we approach our work with these youth.

Another important difference between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses involves the importance of environmental factors.

As you may know, research on juvenile delinquency and youth violence indicates that we have to take into account multiple determinants beyond the individual youth.²⁹ In other words, we have to consider the influence of environmental variables such as peers, family, school, and the neighborhood or community. This differs pretty significantly from how we commonly think about adult sex offenders, doesn't it?

It doesn't mean that environmental issues are not at all important with adults. Rather, we know that these factors are especially critical for youth. For example, research suggests that exposure to violence within the home or community, exposure to aggressive role models, and exposure to pornography may be associated with the development of sexually abusive behaviors in youth.³⁰

And traumatic experiences such as sexual victimization may also be related to sex offending behaviors in youth.³¹

Keep in mind that being victimized doesn't "cause" people to commit sex offenses. In fact, most victims do not go on to commit sex offenses. Despite decades of research on the relationship between a history of sexual victimization and sex offending among *adult* sex offenders, no significant or consistent link has emerged. But there does appear to be some kind of link between sexual abuse and *juvenile*-perpetrated sex offenses.

Some researchers have found that this may be particularly true for juvenile sex offenders who were sexually abused at an early age, by older males outside the family, who were abused multiple times, experienced more intrusive abusive acts, and delayed disclosures of their abuse.³²

Finally, a very important difference that has been identified is that juvenile sex offenders – as a group – appear to have better treatment outcomes and lower recidivism rates than adult sex offenders overall.³³ This may not come as a surprise to many of you. In fact, many professionals feel more optimistic about working with youth because they are believed to be more malleable and more amenable to change than adults, who tend to have more entrenched patterns of thinking and behaving.

You should also know that treatment outcome and follow-up research with youthful sex offenders is quite limited. However, the available data does seem to point to more promising outcomes with these youth. The current evidence suggests that many juveniles who come to the attention of the authorities for committing sex offenses do not continue perpetrating in the future.³⁴ In fact, these youth are more likely to engage in other delinquent or criminal behavior in the future than they are to commit new sex offenses.³⁵

The similarities and differences in characteristics we just reviewed are fairly broad generalizations. We must always keep in mind that some of these descriptors or characteristics apply to some youthful sex offenders, and not to others. For example, some of these juveniles may in fact have clear and consistent patterns of deviant sexual interests, arousal, or preferences. This sexual deviance may be a driving force behind their sex offending, and it may be difficult to modify. Some of these youth may, therefore, be among that subset of youthful sex offenders who *do* continue to commit sex offenses, even despite interventions.

Additionally, there may be some youth whose offending behaviors appear to be more compensatory in nature. For example, because of problems with social skills, self-esteem, or other coping skills deficits, some youth may be more drawn to younger children, who they might perceive to be less threatening or less likely to be rejecting than a peer.

For still other youth, their sex offending behaviors seem neither compensatory nor a function of sexual deviance, *per se*. Rather, these juveniles might engage in a wide variety of other delinquent, violent, or other harmful behaviors, and their sex offending behaviors appear to be yet another manifestation of their significant conduct problems. And there may be even more possibilities, which means that there are probably a number of different subtypes or subgroups of juvenile sex offenders.

Attempting to identify these subtypes – or typologies – can also be quite challenging for researchers, but when typologies do emerge, they can be very helpful to those who work with these youth.

For example, typology research can help to identify different underlying etiological factors for different subgroups of youthful sex offenders, different characteristics and modus operandi for different subgroups, different intervention strategies required for different subgroups, and differential prognoses or expected outcomes for different subgroups.

In turn, this can help us better direct our resources to youth and their families based on what we know about them. And it definitely helps move the field away from the “one size fits all” approach to intervention. Ultimately, the appropriate use of good typology research may increase our chances of being more effective, and may even assist us with prevention efforts.

It probably won't surprise you that quite a bit of typology research has been conducted in the adult sex offender management field. And given the relative “newness” of the juvenile sex offender management field, you probably won't be surprised to learn that the typology research with juvenile sex offenders is quite limited! But there has been some recent research exploring potential ways to classify these youth. So let's take a closer look at a couple of notable examples.

Building upon the work of previous investigators,³⁶ Worling attempted to differentiate subtypes of juvenile sex offenders primarily based on their personality characteristics.³⁷ And consistent with that early research, he found that youthful sex offenders could be classified into four categories.

Use Slide #12: Potential Subtypes (Worling, 2001)

The subtype in which the largest proportion of youth was classified was called the Antisocial/Impulsive group. As the name suggests, these youth tended to hold antisocial attitudes and values and were prone to engage in rule violating and delinquent behaviors. Overall, they were found to be a relatively dissatisfied and rebellious group. In addition, the Antisocial/Impulsive juveniles had a high prevalence of experiencing physical abuse during childhood or adolescence. Not surprisingly, these youth were found to recidivate in non-sexual ways at high rates over time.

A second group of youth was classified as the Unusual/Isolated subtype. These youth were characterized by social awkwardness, emotional disturbance, insecurity, and isolation. What is interesting is that this group of youth recidivated at a higher overall rate when compared to the other subtypes – including the Antisocial/Impulsive group. But their recidivism tended to be non-sexual in nature as well.

The third subtype was the Overcontrolled/Reserved group. Youth in this subtype appeared to be responsible, reliable, and relatively psychologically healthy. As such, they were not criminally-oriented. However, these juveniles kept their emotions tightly wrapped, they were under-assertive, and they appeared to be shy and cautious around others. These juveniles had the lowest recidivism rates – both sexual and non-sexual.

The final identified subtype was the group of youth who were classified as Confident/Aggressive. They were outgoing and socially skilled, and much like those youth in the Overcontrolled/Reserved group, they were generally healthy from a psychological perspective. At the same time, however, Confident/Aggressive juveniles seemed to be self-centered and prone toward aggression.

When you consider these different subtypes, it starts to become more and more clear that their offending behaviors may be driven by different issues. And you can probably see how the interventions used for these groups may be very similar in some ways, but very different in others.

For example, how might treatment be different for juveniles in the Antisocial/Impulsive group in contrast to treatment for the Unusual/Isolated group?

(ALLOW FOR AUDIENCE RESPONSES.)

Very good! Based on the different characteristics in these two subtypes, you've offered some good ideas about how and why you might provide different interventions to these different groups of youth.

Now let's take a look at a more extensive approach to typology research with juvenile sex offenders that is being carried out by Hunter and his colleagues.³⁸

 **Use Slide #13: Potential Subtypes (Hunter et al., 2003, 2004)**

These researchers have begun to investigate the complex relationships among personality characteristics, developmental experiences, and other risk factors which may be associated with different pathways to sexually abusive behavior among youth. Their preliminary research suggests the following three subtypes.³⁹

- Lifestyle delinquent youth, who exhibit conduct problems early in life and continue to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviors throughout adolescence and perhaps adulthood, including sexually aggressive behavior toward female peers and adult women;

- Adolescent onset, non-paraphilic youth, whose sex offending behaviors tend to be directed toward pre-pubescent females and appear to be either experimental in nature or as compensation for deficits in social skills and self confidence; and
- Early adolescent onset, paraphilic juveniles, a group who is believed to have emerging deviant sexual interests and arousal and may subsequently target both pre-pubescent males and females.

Hearing about these differences, you can start to get an idea about how we wouldn't want to approach all youth in the exact same way. Understanding the juvenile subtypes and varied pathways can assist those who provide treatment and other interventions with developing differential and tailored strategies.

So, to sum things up, as you've now seen, the field is advancing, and we are beginning to get a clearer and more research-based picture of juvenile sex offenders.

We have learned that even though there are some similarities between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses, these youth are certainly not simply younger, smaller versions of adult sex offenders. Several important differences exist. In fact, the current research and professional literature seems to indicate that juvenile sex offenders "look" much more like other juvenile delinquents than they "look" like adult sex offenders.⁴⁰

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, we also learned that juvenile sex offenders are a heterogeneous population. And the emerging typology research has provided additional evidence about the diversity of these youth.

Part IV: Implications

So what are the implications of all of this information for our work with juvenile sex offenders?

It means that we need to keep in mind the differences (and similarities) between adult and juvenile sex offenders when we think about our approaches to managing these youth.

And it means that we must take into account the research on adolescent development, as well as juvenile delinquency and youth violence, because this research can be very helpful for informing policies and practices for juvenile sex offenders. Simply doing what we do with adult sex offenders is no longer the best response.

It also means that our management strategies must be individualized, because these youth obviously are not all alike. "One size fits all" responses are not appropriate.

And all of this is relevant to how we respond to these youth at *all* phases of the juvenile justice system.

Use Slide #14: Implications

For example, at the point of disposition in the juvenile and family court, judges and other system actors should have the benefit of understanding the similarities and differences between adult and juvenile sex offenders and the developmental and environmental factors that we've just reviewed.

And they'll also want to know what kinds of individual and family needs are present – as well as the strengths and assets that exist. That way, placement decisions and court orders will be individualized based on the specific risk and needs of the youth and his or her family.

Judges and others involved at the point of disposition will also want to know that some of these youth can in fact be managed safely in the community with the right kinds of restrictions, expectations, and interventions in place, and that other youth will require a residential, institutional, or other out-of-home placement. In order to appropriately place them, judges need information about which youth need which types of intervention and in what kind of setting they should receive these services. These kinds of decisions should be driven by good assessment data.

As you will see in the next section, what the research tells us about these youth also has important implications for how and what we assess. Some of the factors that we need to identify and monitor with youthful sex offenders will be similar to what we assess for adult sex offenders, and some will be different. And the assessment tools that we use need to be developmentally appropriate and informed by what we know about these youth.

From a treatment and supervision perspective, what we currently know about juvenile sex offenders has implications for which interventions, services, and strategies we should be using with which youth. We'll talk in much more detail about those management components later in this training, including some examples of evidence-based interventions.

For now, suffice it to say that because we know that these youth are not all alike, and that they are not simply younger versions of adult sex offenders, our approaches to treatment and supervision must also be tailored to meet the developmental, individual, and environmental circumstances of each youth.

And of course, this information should be considered when enacting or amending legislation. Again, rather than automatically putting into place the same types of legislation for youth that exist for adults, policymakers should be given the

opportunity to understand the important differences between adults and juveniles who commit sex offenses and consider how that information can inform the laws that are introduced and ultimately passed.

In fact, with juveniles who commit sex offenses, the ways in which some of these statutes are designed and implemented have the potential to impact victims, families, and the youth themselves in negative or anti-therapeutic ways that are not necessarily desired or intended. Sex offender-specific legislation that pertains to registration, community notification, and civil commitment are key examples. We'll spend some time talking about those issues later in this training as well.

Finally, what we now know about juvenile sex offenders may have an impact on the ways in which we respond to the needs and interests of victims. For example, it can be used to inform approaches to safety planning in the home and in schools, considerations for family preservation and reunification, supervision strategies, and parent or caregiver interventions.

At this point, let's recap what we've covered during this section.

Use Slide #15: Summary

- First, although they represent a very small proportion of the cases within the juvenile justice system, we know that juveniles are responsible for a significant proportion of all sex offenses, and that juvenile sex offender management is a critical issue.
- Second, although we know that juvenile sex offender management is a problem that needs to be addressed, the field is still early in its development, particularly in comparison to the adult sex offender management field.
- Third, contrary to previous assumptions, a growing body of research and literature indicates that these youth do not mirror their adult counterparts.
- And fourth, we know that there is no such thing as a “typical” juvenile sex offender – the research clearly shows their heterogeneity.
- Lastly, because these youth may have different needs and circumstances and pose different levels of risk, because they differ in important ways from adult sex offenders, and because multiple determinants influence the behaviors of these youth, “one size fits all” approaches don't make good sense and are not likely to be effective. Rather, we must ensure that all of our management strategies are developmentally responsive, individualized, and, to the extent that it is available, informed by research.

Before we move on to the next section of the training, let's take some time to do an exercise that will get us thinking about some of the complexities we face in

managing these cases. We'll use case studies about three different youths to stimulate our thinking about how different these cases can be and how we can best manage them. We will also be referring back to these case studies later in the training.

 **Refer to Handout:** Case Studies

Note to Trainers: *This exercise is designed to provide participants with the opportunity to begin thinking about and discussing the characteristics of and differences between juvenile sex offenders, and to begin to consider what this means in terms of how these youth are managed. Ask participants to spend 10-15 minutes reading through the three case studies provided, and then have them divide into small groups to tackle the questions in the Characteristics of Juvenile Sex Offenders learning activity.*



Learning Activity: Characteristics of Juvenile Sex Offenders

- Divide yourselves up into small groups of (ideally) no more than 10 people.
- Review the three hypothetical case studies in your participant materials and jot down answers to the following questions:
 - What about each case (Mark, John, and Evan) struck you as particularly noteworthy or important?
 - What are the similarities across the three cases?
 - How do the cases differ from one another?
 - How might these differences impact how the cases are managed? For example, do you think the juveniles require different treatment approaches or supervision strategies? Is residential or institutional placement more appropriate for one than for the others?
- Spend a few minutes discussing your answers to these questions with your colleagues.

Note to Trainers: *Ask the groups about their responses to the questions posed above. List participant responses to the Learning Activity on a flip chart as they are submitted by participants. Note the differences in the youths' offense patterns, their strengths and needs, their responses to treatment and supervision, their progress in school and the community, and the level of family or other support available to the youth. Also make note of participants' ideas about how these and other factors affect their ideas about how these individual cases should be managed. Let participants know that there will be another exercise related to the case studies later in the training that asks them to consider in greater detail the specific supervision and treatment needs of these particular offenders.*

With this exercise completed, we have now finished the introductory and framing aspects of this training curriculum.

Before we move into the more specific substantive components of the training, do you have any questions or comments about the material we have covered so far?

(ALLOW FOR AUDIENCE RESPONSES BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT SECTION.)

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 2005

² Snyder & Sickmund, 2006

³ FBI, 2005

⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006; Kilpatrick, Edmunds, & Seymour, 1992; Saunders, Smith, & Kilpatrick, 2003

⁵ Snyder, 2005

⁶ National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2004

⁷ See Ryan, 1997d

⁸ Abel, Mittelman, & Becker, 1985; Groth, 1979; Groth, Longo, and McFadin, 1982; Longo & Groth, 1983

⁹ see e.g., Barbaree, Hudson, & Seto, 1993

¹⁰ see, e.g., Bumby & Talbot, in press; Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Chaffin, Letourneau, & Silovsky, 2002; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Prescott & Longo, 2006; Zimring, 2004

¹¹ Becker & Hicks, 2003; Bumby & Talbot, in press; Caldwell, 2002; Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM), 2001; Chaffin et al., 2002; Heinz & Ryan, 1997; Garfinkle, 2003; Hunter & Lexier, 1998; Letourneau, 2006; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Trivits & Reppucci, 2002; Zimring, 2004

¹² see e.g., Fagan & Zimring, 2000; Howell, 2003; Mendel, 2000, 2001; Torbet & Syzmanski, 1998.

¹³ see, e.g., Chaffin & Bonner, 1998; Chaffin et al., 2002; Hunter & Lexier, 1998; Letourneau, 2006; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Trivits & Reppucci, 2002; Weinrott, 1996; Zimring, 2004

¹⁴ Snyder & Sickmund, 2006; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998, 2006

¹⁵ see, e.g., Becker & Hicks, 2003; Becker & Murphy, 1998; Chaffin et al., 2002; Epps & Fisher, 2004; Schwartz, 1995

¹⁶ see, e.g., Becker & Hicks, 2003; Becker & Murphy, 1998; Chaffin et al., 2002; Epps & Fisher, 2004; Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2003; Hunter, Hazelwood, & Slessinger, 2000; Schwartz, 1995; Smallbone, 2006

¹⁷ Barbaree & Marshall, 2006; Chaffin et al., 2002; Epps & Fisher, 2004; Fanniff & Becker, 2006a; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Longo & Prescott, 2006; Miranda & Corcoran, 2000

¹⁸ Becker & Harris, 2004; CSOM, 1999; Hunter & Becker, 1994; Hunter, Goodwin, & Becker, 1994; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Prescott, 2006; Smith & Fischer, 1999

¹⁹ see, e.g., Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004

²⁰ see, e.g., Worling & Langstrom, 2006

²¹ Hare, 1996, 1998, 2003; Millon, Simonson, Burket-Smith, & Davis, 1998

²² Hare, 1996, 1998, 2003; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004; Millon et al., 1998

²² Edens, Skeem, Cruise, & Cauffman, 2001; Prescott, 2006

²⁴ Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Forth, Kosson, & Hare, 2003; Gretton, Hare, & Catchpole, 2004

²⁵ Cottle et al., 2001; Forth et al., 2003; Gretton et al., 2004

²⁶ see, e.g., Langstrom & Grann, 2000; Worling & Curwen, 2000

²⁷ Laws, 1989, Laws, Hudson, & Ward, 2000; Pithers & Cumming, 1995; Pithers, Kashima, Cumming, Beal, & Buell, 1988

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- ²⁸ see, e.g. Creeden, 2006 and Fanniff & Becker, 2006 for brief reviews of these issues with sexually abusive youth.
- ²⁹ Borduin & Schaeffer, 1998; Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, & Cunningham, 1998; Kashani, Jones, Bumby, & Thomas, Loeber & Farrington, 1999; Moffit, Caspi, Dickson, Silva, & Stanton, 1996
- ³⁰ Fagan & Wexler, 1998; Ford & Linney, 1995; Hunter et al., 2003; Hunter et al., 2000; Hunter & Longo, 2004; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2004
- ³¹ Burton, Smith-Darden, Frankel, 2006; Hunter & Figueredo, 2000; Hunter et al., 2003, Kaufman, Hilliker, & Daleiden, 1996; Veneziano, Veneziano, & LeGrand, 2000; Worling, 1995, 2001
- ³² Burton et al., 2006; Hunter & Figueredo, 2000; Hunter et al., 2003; Worling, 1995
- ³³ see, Alexander, 1999; Becker & Hunter, 1997; Caldwell, 2002; Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson, Gordon, Harris, Marques, Murphy, Quinsey, & Seto, 2002; Prentky, Knight, & Lee, 1997; Righthand & Welch, 2001; Weinrott, 1996; Worling & Curwen, 2000; Zimring, 2004
- ³⁴ see, e.g., CSOM, 1999; Caldwell, 2002; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Nisbet, Wilson, & Smallbone, 2004
- ³⁵ Caldwell, 2002; Nisbet, et al., 2004; Waite, Kellar, McGarvey, Wieckowski, Pinkerton, & Brown, 2005; Worling & Curwen, 2000; Zimring, 2004
- ³⁶ Smith, Monastersky, & Deisher, 1987
- ³⁷ Worling, 2001
- ³⁸ Hunter, 2006; Hunter et al., 2000, 2003; Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2004
- ³⁹ Hunter, 2006
- ⁴⁰ Epps & Fisher, 2004; Letourneau & Miner, 2005; Smallbone, 2006