Ethical Issues in Treatment of Adolescents with Illegal Sexual Behavior
Key Ethical Principles

- Beneficence
- Nonmalfecasance
- Knowledge of professional codes of conduct
- Reasoned judgments and evaluation
Ethical Principles

- Consensual and evolving
- Overlap, but in some areas are distinct from, governing laws and policies
  - A higher bar. What you ‘should do’ rather than what you ‘must do’
- Sometimes clear cut. Sometimes require interpretation
  - Because ethical principles often evolve out of dialogue among colleagues, it is wise to discuss less clear cut circumstances with colleagues
Areas of Ethical Concerns

- Limits of confidentiality
- Competency of clinician
  - Knowledgeable, experienced
  - Assessment, treatment
- Use of intrusive procedures
- Use of plethysmograph, polygraph
- Use of anti-androgen medications
- Obligation to client and to community safety
Some Key Elements that May Complicate Ethics in AISB Services

- Coerced treatment population
- Minors and Prisoners
  - Both are considered vulnerable populations
- Forensic. Authority and responsibility for legal and life-affecting decisions placed on treatment providers and assessors
- Strong emotional reactions
- Issues of community protection and obligations to the court and public—not just to the client
Some Key Elements that May Impact Ethical Issues for AISB

- “Moral panic” atmosphere in public policy and media
  - Exaggerated perception of danger and risk with adolescents
  - Exaggerated suspicion of massive “hidden” deviancy, despite strong objective evidence to the contrary
  - Radical solutions advocated, contrary to customary standards of treatment
The prosecutor refers a teenager who has been accused of a sex offense, and is awaiting trial. The youth and his family maintain that he is innocent. You are asked to determine if his case fits the profile of an adolescent with illegal sexual behavior.

- What are the ethical issues involved?
- What does the relevant science suggest?
- What are the courses of action?
A registration petition has been filed for a youth, and you are asked to conduct a risk evaluation in order to advise the court about the youth’s risk. The judge’s wife is a counselor. The judge wants you to administer a Rorschach, a human figure drawing, and an MMPI-A to the youth, and he wants his wife to look these over to help him decide about the youth’s sex offense risk.

- What are the ethical issues involved?
- What does the relevant science suggest?
- What are the courses of action?
You are referred a 16 year old girl who was recently reported to have touched his 4 year old brother when she was 12. There have been no problematic sexual behaviors in the past four years. You don’t think he needs sex offender treatment. The girl’s attorney tells you that if you don’t accept her into your outpatient program, she will be placed in a lock-up program.

- What are the ethical issues involved?
- Is there relevant science to consider?
- What are the possible courses of action?
You are a private treatment provider using “sex-offender specific group therapy” which is mandated for juvenile sex offenders in your county. You use and strongly believe in relapse prevention, cycles, and thinking errors as your core approach, although you realize that these approaches have never been rigorously tested. One day, you read a new research study which definitively demonstrates that these approaches did not impact recidivism. You read another series of studies which found that a totally different type of treatment—much shorter term and much more of an in-home family therapy approach—has had better results for one common type of AISB you see.

- Are there ethical issues involved here or not?
- What are the pro’s and con’s of various courses of action?
Dealing with Ethical Problems

- Review available Ethical Standards
- Consult with colleagues
- Consult with Ethics Committees of state professional organizations
- Consult with experts in the field
# Broad Professional Ethics Guidelines

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<th>Field</th>
<th>Association or Board</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone/Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>American Psychological Association, 750 First St, NE, Washington, DC 20002,</td>
<td>(800) 374-2721, <a href="http://www.apa.org">www.apa.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician/Medical</td>
<td>American Medical Association, 515 North State Street, Chicago, IL 60610,</td>
<td>(800) 621-8335, <a href="http://www.ama-assn.org">www.ama-assn.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital and Family Therapy</td>
<td>Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards, 1843 Austin Bluffs</td>
<td>Pkwy, Colorado Springs, CO 80918, (719) 388-0615, <a href="http://www.amftrb.org">www.amftrb.org</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Licensed Professional Counselor</td>
<td>American Counseling Association, 5999 Stevenson Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304,</td>
<td>(800) 347-6647, <a href="http://www.counseling.org">www.counseling.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Behavior Practitioner</td>
<td>North American Association of Masters in Psychology, P.O. Box 721270,</td>
<td>Norman, OK 73070, (405) 329-3030, <a href="http://www.enamp.org">www.enamp.org</a></td>
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### Specific Guidelines for AISB Treatment Providers

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<td>1</td>
<td>Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, 4900 S.W. Griffin Dr, Suite 274, Beaverton, OR 97005, (503) 643-1023, <a href="http://www.atsa.com">www.atsa.com</a></td>
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Conclusions

- Goal of ethical practice: “Do no harm.”
- Treatment of AISB involves some unique ethical issues
- Providers need to be licensed, competent, and use consultation to resolve ethical dilemmas