

Addressing Problematic Sexual Behaviors in the Least-Restrictive Setting; Preserving Rapport and Staying Trauma-Informed



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Background

- ◆ It is imperative for agencies supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to focus on research-based, trauma-informed techniques and methods.
- ◆ An area that has remained fragmented, despite research and despite the philosophy of *Everyday Lives*, has been the area of response to displayed problematic sexual behaviors (PSB).
- ◆ Often, individuals who display PSBs are placed within restrictive environments, removed from their current residences, etc., all for what is thought to be best practice regarding safety and liability.
- ◆ Individuals, especially if criminally charged, would likely be removed from their residence and placed under 24/7 supervision in a residential program that focuses on PSB and naturally limits community inclusion.
- ◆ This may lead to the individual being subject to restrictions traditionally imposed as a response to PSB, even if the individual's skillset warrants greater independence.
- ◆ While this may be best practice in some circumstances, especially in the short term, it may result in undesirable long-term ramifications for both the individual and the community.

Objective

The proposed process challenges existing processes that may marginalize individuals because of displayed maladaptive behaviors (PSB). This can be achieved through research based assessment of risk, specific trainings to equip staff and family members, and ongoing, specialized behavioral supports.

Process

The following steps represent a trauma-informed approach that is organic in nature and may preserve relationships and rapport, especially when problematic sexual behavior is first displayed:

Step 1 (Ongoing)

Assessments

- ◆ Interviews are conducted with natural supports, treatment teams, and the individual, within the individual's current setting.
- ◆ Assessment evaluations include but are not limited to the following instruments; ARMIDILO-S, SOTIPS, Static-99R. The instrument(s) selected reflect the specific circumstances of the individual and inform the team's approach.
- ◆ Completed assessments include research-based recommendations for supports needed to reduce risk.

Step 2 (Ongoing)

Trainings

- ◆ Informed by the assessment, trainings are specific to each individual's case so that all information is relevant to the support team. High-quality trainings empower both the support staff and the individual.

Step 3 (Ongoing)

Specialized Behavioral Supports

- ◆ In-person sessions, observations, etc. within the existing setting provide the individual and team with real-time feedback and ensure that risk factors and offense cycles are recognized.

Everyday Lives

This recommendation highlights four major themes within the *Everyday Lives* model:

Support People with Complex Needs

- ◆ This process fosters rational and evidence-based approaches to supporting complex needs.

Promote Safety

- ◆ This process considers the immediate and long-term safety of the community, agency, staff, and individual, thus fostering a culture of safety.

Develop and Support Qualified Staff

- ◆ Maintaining relationships and the rapport already built with existing supports, this process equips anyone involved in training and communication with education and access to vast resources through modeling, instruction, and empowerment.

Expand Options for Community Living

- ◆ With an informed approach, individuals are not limited to restrictive residential options.
- ◆ Supports can be provided within the current setting or, if a more restrictive setting is warranted, can be designed to prepare the individual for a least-restrictive environment in the future.

Exceptions

With any potentially risky situation, there are exceptions to this process. Actions should be victim-focused so as not to create further trauma. Supports may not be successful or possible in the current residence under certain circumstances:

- ◆ Sexual offense of housemate/classmate
- ◆ Discovery of sexual attraction to minors in a setting with minors present
- ◆ Court order/probationary stipulation

Justification

Among many others, the following research findings support the proposed process:

- ◆ Positive rapport lends to positive treatment outcomes.
 - ▶ For this reason, it is essential to preserve existing rapport if possible.

Leach, Matthew J., Rapport: A key to treatment success. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* (2005) 11, 262-265.

- ◆ Poorly-planned living arrangements and community integration lead to higher rates of recidivism.

- ▶ For this reason, planning and follow-through surrounding risk and needs are essential for positive outcomes.

Willis, Gwenda M., Grace, Randolph C., Assessment of Community Reintegration Planning for Sex Offenders: Poor Planning Predicts Recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Volume 36, Issue 5, pages 494-512.

- ◆ There are methods of treatment that align with *Everyday Lives*, such as the Good Lives Model, which remain person-directed while managing risk.

- ▶ For this reason, blanket restrictions simply manage risk rather than motivating adaptive behavior.

Ward, T., & Stewart, C. A. (2003). The treatment of sex offenders: Risk management and good lives. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 34(4), 353-360.

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