Sexual Abuse Prevention & Public Policy: Trends and Recommendations for Evidence Based Policy Reform (Part 1)

Andrew J. Harris, Ph.D.
University of Massachusetts, Lowell
Katherine Gotch, M.A.
Integrated Clinical & Correctional Services
Jill S. Levenson, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.
Barry University

Public policy affects all areas of sexual abuse prevention, including the work of clinicians, justice and corrections practitioners, and victim advocates. ATSA members have the power to influence public policy at the local, state and/or national level through public education and engagement around sexual violence. However, this engagement can be difficult or daunting without support, training and advice about effective ways in which to do so. This session, which is the first of two sessions aimed at providing ATSA members with the knowledge and tools to effectively engage in policy reform, will offer an overview of recent trends in public policy related to sexual abuse prevention in the United States. The session will also feature a discussion of emerging research surrounding sex offender registration and notification policies, and will highlight five major recommendations to guide policy reform efforts in this important area of public policy.

Learning Goals and Objectives:
- Participants will learn about current trends in public policy related to sexual abuse prevention throughout the United States, and the implications of these policies for sexual abuse prevention professionals.
- Participants will describe five key areas for evidence-based registry reform.
- Participants will learn how to effectively discuss research findings when educating non-academic audiences about evidence-informed sex offender management policy and practice.

Andrew J. Harris is Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs at the University of Massachusetts Lowell College of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and Associate Professor in the University's School of Criminology and Justice Studies. He has served as Principal Investigator for several major studies funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, including a current nationwide project focused on implementation of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA). Dr. Harris has served as a consultant to state policy boards, public behavioral health agencies, community-based
Creating Balance
2017 ATSA Conference | Friday October 27 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

service providers, and state and municipal correctional systems, and his work has appeared in a range of inter-disciplinary journals, including Criminal Justice and Behavior, Crime & Delinquency, Sexual Abuse, Criminal Justice Policy Review, and Victims & Offenders. He serves as Associate Editor of the ATSA journal Sexual Abuse, and has served as editor of the Sex Offender Law Report, a nationally-circulated publication read by policymakers and legal and criminal justice professionals.

Katherine “Katie” Gotch, LPC, CSOT Ms. Gotch earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Boston University and a master’s degree in forensic psychology from the University of Denver. She has worked in the field of sexual abuse since 2000 as a clinician, evaluator, trainer, educator, and in legislative/policy development. She currently maintains a private practice which provides specialized clinical and consultation services related to adults with sexual behavior problems and other forms of abusive and/or violent behavior. She is a Clinical Member – ATSA, Board Member & Policy Representative – Oregon ATSA, Co-Chair of the NPEIV Policy Action Team, and Co-Chair of the ATSA Public Policy Committee. She frequently provides training to correction agencies, treatment providers, policy makers, and other community partners on sexual offense specific management and treatment, static and dynamic risk, incorporation of the risk/need/responsivity principles into practice, public policy, public engagement, and related topics. She is a certified Static-99R/STABLE & ACUTE-2007 trainer.

Dr. Jill Levenson, PhD, LCSW, is a professor of Social Work at Barry University in Miami, Florida, USA. She has published over 100 articles about policies and clinical interventions designed to prevent repeat sexual offending. Her groundbreaking research on the link between childhood adversity and adult criminality has paved the way for innovations in sex offense rehabilitation programs that now utilize a trauma-informed care framework. She has also been a treatment provider for over 25 years, using a scientist-practitioner model to inform both her research and her work with clients. Her current research focuses on understanding the obstacles to help-seeking for minor-attracted persons, and she is developing training for clinicians to work effectively and ethically with non-offending MAPs.