

F-13

Emerging Practices in Assessing the Risk of Sexual Recidivism

Panel Chair: KiDeuk Kim, Ph.D.

Panel Participants:

Grant Duwe, Ph.D.

Elizabeth J. Letourneau, Ph.D.

Michael F. Caldwell, Psy.D.

This panel features research on the state-of-the-art risk assessment of juveniles who have sexually offended. Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, a multidisciplinary team of researchers led by KiDeuk Kim (Urban Institute), Grant Duwe (Minnesota Department of Corrections), Elizabeth Letourneau (Johns Hopkins University), and Michael Caldwell (University of Wisconsin-Madison) are developing methods to accurately predict the risk of sexual recidivism. By harnessing machine learning algorithms and understanding the dynamic nature of risk assessment processes, this study aims to advance current practice in the development and validation of risk assessment instruments. For the past several decades, much research has gone into the discovery of risk and protective factors in explaining sexual offending but yielded relatively little success. This panel presents new promising evidence that youths at risk of sexual recidivism can be identified without making as many false positive errors as conventional actuarial tools often do. Presenters will provide an overview of the study and discuss its implications for research and practice in assessing the risk of sexual recidivism among juveniles.

Goals of the Panel

This panel will provide participants with opportunities:

1. To learn about results and their implications for research from a multi-state study on the risk of sexual recidivism among juveniles who have sexually offended
2. To gain a basic understanding of how machine learning algorithms work in risk assessment and how they compare to traditional approaches (e.g., logistic regression) in terms of predictive accuracy
3. To develop critical thinking for current practices in risk assessment and validation.