

## **SHAPING THE FUTURE**

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

**F-21**

### **Strategies to Engage Offender Families Within the Sex Offender Supervision and Treatment Process**

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Research of sex offenders on probation has asserted that social bonds and stability to family increases self-control and decreases the risk to reoffend. Individuals are less likely to engage in criminal behavior when they have strong, nurturing relationships (Cullen & Gendreau, 1989; Eher, Grunhut, et al., 1997; Gendreau, 1996; Gendreau & Andrews, 1994; Laub & Sampson, 2003). Engaging Ongoing Support in the Community has been identified as an evidence-based practice that has a direct correlation with family engagement. Community supervision officers (probation and parole) and treatment providers working with individuals who have committed sexual offenses are often presented with opportunities to involve and engage family members within the treatment and community supervision process. However, community supervision officers and providers often overlook or avoid opportunities to involve or include family members given that sometimes family involvement can lead to challenges for those professionals working with the individual. It is important for professionals to involve and engage not only supportive family members but also those family members who do not appear supportive of the criminal justice system or probation/treatment process.

Initially, the workshop will identify challenges related to engaging families in the process. The workshop will review the research supporting family engagement. We will discuss strategies and benefits to engaging the offender's family members into the treatment and community supervision process. Strategies include effective communication to families about expectations while on community supervision, education and information sharing about the process, inclusion in probation and treatment meetings as appropriate.

#### **Learning Goals**

- Upon completion of the workshop, learners will be familiar with relevant research supporting the benefits of family engagement.
- Upon completion of the workshop, learners will be familiar with the evidenced-based principles related to family engagement and how to apply these principles.
  - Engaging Ongoing Support in the Community
  - Increase Positive Reinforcement
  - Enhance Intrinsic Motivation

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- Upon completion of the workshop, learners will become familiar with how to implement strategies to engage and involve offender's families and loved ones and orient them to community supervision and the treatment process.
- Learners will hear testimonies and perspectives from family members to gain a better understanding of the benefits of engaging families in the criminal justice process.

**Angel Weant** has been working in the criminal justice system for twenty-five years, starting as a probation officer in Colorado's 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District in 1998 and transferring to the Colorado State Court Administrator's Office Division of Probation Services in 2007. Throughout her career, Angel has cultivated expertise around advancing practice for the successful treatment and supervision of sex offender and economic crime populations. She has managed many multi-year projects, including a statewide court improvement project for the Colorado Courts and a research project relating to systemic responses to technical violations that resulted in improved trainings for probation officers. In her current position as a Probation Analyst, which she has held since 2010, Angel facilitates program oversight for sex offender and economic crime probationers, assists in policy development and implementation of specialized programming, provides legislative testimony and technical assistance to stakeholders, and also serves as the Judicial Representative to the Colorado Sex Offender Management Board (SOMB). Additionally, Angel has developed and delivered numerous trainings related to sex offender management including: risk assessment, Evidenced Based and Best Practice supervision methods, fostering a NON-fear based team approach to supervision and safety planning. She has presented at numerous esteemed conferences and continues to conduct extensive local and national trainings related to sex offender management and supervision. Angel holds a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice Administration and Management.

**Missy Gursky** is a Licensed Professional Counselor with over 25 years of experience in mental health therapy specializing in working with youth and adults who have engaged in sexually problematic behaviors. Ms. Gursky has completed evaluations for private attorneys; Federal, States, and local government; social services departments; state attorneys; and for persons with developmental/intellectual disabilities. Ms. Gursky had been the clinical director of a large outpatient community-based treatment and evaluation agency for over 20 years. She has provided supervision and consultation to numerous staff and agencies regarding offense specific treatment and assessment, and interventions for those who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviors. She has provided expertise testimony regarding sexual offenses. Ms. Gursky has developed curriculum and programs within this field. Additionally, she has provided numerous training on a plethora of subjects state-wide for various different agencies; in addition to national trainings and presentations. Ms. Gursky was a member of the Sex Offender Management Board for numerous years which creates the standards and guidelines for those working within the field of sexual offenses and has participated in numerous committees relating to the treatment and evaluation of persons who engage in sexually abusive behaviors.