

# Sexual offenders with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Assessment, treatment, & policy concerns

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# Estimating prevalence

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- Sex offenders vs. sex offenders with IDD
- Limitations in the research
  - Definitions
    - Intellectual and developmental disabilities
    - Sex offending
  - Reporting
  - Lack of assessment
  - Over-representation in correctional systems and institutions
  - Overlap between victimization and perpetration

# Offense characteristics

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- Definitions of sexual behavior
  - Sex offenses
  - Inappropriate sexual behavior
  - Counterfeit deviance (Hingsburger, Griffiths, & Quinsey, 1991)
- Features of IDD sex offenses
  - More non-contact offenses
  - Smaller proportion of female victims
  - Lack specificity – opportunistic
  - Victims known to the offender
- Reported vs. arrest statistics

# Background characteristics

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- Family psychopathology and psychosocial deprivation
- Abuse and neglect in early childhood
- School adjustment and behavioral problems
- Social and interpersonal skills deficits
- Sexually naïve; lack sexual knowledge and experience with appropriate sexual partners
- Psychiatric illness

# Etiological considerations

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- Biological factors
  - Impulsivity, poor judgment, and limited problem-solving ability
- Personality characteristics
  - Lack of confidence and poor self-esteem
  - Poor self-identity
  - Lack of coping skills
- Learning and behavioral reinforcement
- Social deficits
- Poor sexual boundaries
- History of abuse and sexual exploitation

# Questions for consideration

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- Important clinical differences:
  - Individuals with IDD and sexual behavior problems/offenses
  - Individuals with IDD only
  - Individuals with sexual behavior problems/offenses only
- How might these differences relate to clinical needs, treatment methods, risk, and other important outcomes?

# Methods and preliminary findings

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- To be described during our presentation....

# Unique treatment needs

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- Assessment-based treatment
- Potential programs – comprehensive treatment approach
  - Dialectical Behavior Therapy
  - Positive Behavior Support
  - Social skills training
  - Daily living skills
- To address sexual behaviors
  - Sexual knowledge and attitudes
  - Offense-specific treatment integrated within a more comprehensive program
  - Personal responsibility

# Policy considerations

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- Changes in the population over time
- Specialized legislation and policy affecting sex offenders (including those with IDD)
  - Registration and notification
  - Sexually violent predator laws
- Placement and release planning
  - Assessing risk
  - Providing adequate support

# Functional assessment of behavior in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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# Defining the behavior

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- Categories of problematic sexual behavior
  - Deviance-driven
    - Traditional view of “sex offending”
    - May be more predatory and similarly characteristic in nature
  - Counterfeit deviance (e.g., Hingsberger, Griffiths, & Quinsey, 1991)
- Relevance
  - Treatment
  - Placement
  - Risk prediction

# Potential explanations for these behaviors

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- Deviant interests (paraphilias)
- Sexual options limited in institutional settings
  - Environment not conducive to forming normative sexual relationships
  - Fears and prejudices of staff
- Very little privacy within institutions
- Reinforcement and learning
- Lack of corrective action when these behaviors do occur
- Lack of sexual education or attention to sexual needs
- Poor social and relationship skills

# Assessment challenges

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- Self-report problems
  - Poor memory
  - Reduced attention span
  - Comprehension problems
  - Format of material
  - Suggestibility and acquiescence
- Bias of staff and caregivers
- Traditional sex offender assessments not normed on IDD population
- Heterogeneity of this group

# Using functional behavior assessment

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- Multipurpose assessment
  - Identify frequency of behavior
  - Behavior patterns emerge
  - Potential reinforcement
  - Responses of others in the environment when behavior occurs
- Applications to problematic sexual behaviors
  - Overt vs. subtle sexual behaviors
  - Predatory vs. counterfeit deviance
  - Development of a behavioral plan to reduce the behavior

# Methods and preliminary findings

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- To be described during our presentation....

# Discussion and conclusions

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- Identification of behavioral patterns
- Creating a staff response plan to effectively address sexual behaviors
  - Overt sexual behaviors
  - Grooming or “build-up” sexual behaviors
  - Counterfeit deviance – identifying the function
- Incorporating findings within the client’s treatment plan

# References and acknowledgements

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- Hingsburger, D., Griffiths, D., & Quinsey, V. (1991). Detecting counterfeit deviance: Differentiating sexual deviance from sexual inappropriateness. *Habilitation Mental Health Care Newsletter*, 10, 51-54.
  
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