

# NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

*An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.*



Volume 1, Issue 9

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Dear Colleague,

We want to continue to expand our readership, and we need your help!

**If you have enjoyed these newsletters, please email this newsletter to a colleague.** There are three simple ways to do this:

1. Just click on "Join Our Mailing List" (above right) and follow the directions.
2. Simply forward this email with a suggestion to sign up for these great free issues.
3. You can send this link to a friend and ask them to register.

[www.neari.com/ mailing.html](http://www.neari.com/ mailing.html)

As you know **this newsletter is free.** Our goal is to educate professionals about the unique practice of working with children and adolescents who have sexual behavior problems. We don't want people to see them as monsters or "mini-perps." We want people to see them as the kids they really are. Kids need our help, our support, and our clear direction about healthy relationships.

If you need an early holiday gift for a trusted colleague, consider sending out our newsletter as a way to connect and say hello.

Thank you for your help and your support.

Sincerely,  
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis  
[www.neari.com](http://www.neari.com)

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## SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER

**Take any one of NEARI's online courses for FREE if you register by the end of December 2008.**

We know these economic times are difficult on everyone and we have heard too many stories of agencies slashing their training budgets and laying off staff. NEARI wants to do what it can to keep this field vibrant.

So for the holidays, we are offering our online courses at no cost for anyone who works for a public sector agency, community mental health center, residential program, or other nonprofit treatment center. Our courses are completely free if you register in the month of December. (You will need to pay the small fee, \$5-15, for the 2 to 4 CE credits if you need them.)

We hope you will enjoy participating in this offer. You have 30 days to complete the course of your choice. Just [click here](#) to register (to begin the process, select a course title).

- When you are asked for your Organization, please click on "**New England Adolescent Research Institute - Holiday Gift.**"
- When you are asked for your Payment Method, please select "Organizational Code," then enter the keycode as **593bgz2.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@neari.com](mailto:info@neari.com) or call us at 413-540-0712.

**Our Course Price: FREE**  
**Continuing Education Credits Price: \$5 to \$15**  
**Continuing Education Types: APA, LMHC, and NASW**

## A Meaningful Guide to Working with Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

The Issue

## Featured Website



The Search Institute is a leading global innovator in discovering what children and adolescents need to become as caring, healthy, and responsible adults: [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

Based upon this research, they have developed the [Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets](#)® -- common sense, positive experiences, and qualities that help build resiliency in children. When most people talk about reducing risk factors, they often forget that children also need us to focus on protective factors that help in a child's resiliency.

### Next Month

NEARI eNEWS will discuss a study by James Worling that challenges myths related to offense-related sexual interests.

### About the Author: David S. Prescott, LICSW



[David Prescott website](#)

A nationally recognized expert in the field of sexual abuse assessment, treatment, management, and prevention, Mr. Prescott has published numerous articles and authored, edited, and co-edited books on risk assessment, interviewing, and providing residential treatment to youth. He is the President of ATSA and is currently the Clinical Director at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake, Minnesota.

### Questions/Feedback

Please email us at [info@nari.com](mailto:info@nari.com) or call us at 413.540.0712 to let us know if you have a question or a topic you would like us to cover.

If at any time you no longer want the e-newsletter, just let us know and we will remove your name from our list.

We value your trust. We will not sell or give your contact information to any other organization.

In recent years, the public and researchers have focused increasingly on how to work most effectively with children who present sexual behavior problems (CSBP). The issues facing the professionals working with these children are complex and very different from the issues that face professionals working with adults and adolescents who sexually abuse. Recognizing this growing awareness and need for guidance, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) established a task force to examine what is known about this most perplexing and vulnerable population. The final report is available to the public at: <http://www.atsa.com/pdfs/Report-TFCSPB.pdf>.

The CSBP Task Force Report reviews the research that looks at children with sexual behavior problems and provides information that will be helpful for assessment, treatment, and public policy. The report notes:

- Treatment for sexual behavior problems in children must begin with a developmental understanding of that child and account for co-occurring issues, such as family and psychiatric factors.
- Appropriate treatment for children must involve their caregivers and other supportive adults. It provides education about healthy sexual behaviors and helps children develop healthy thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors related to relationships and their growing sexuality.
- CSBP are at very low risk to engage in future sexual abuse, particularly after receiving appropriate treatment.
- Children typically respond to treatment quickly and favorably.
- Because these children change rapidly, professionals must review their placement and intervention decisions frequently.
- There are virtually no characteristics common to all children with sexual behavior problems.

The report further provides perspective on areas of controversy such as denial of problem behavior (e.g., it is not unusual for children to deny breaking rules), whether and how to address victimization issues, and ideas for proper assessment and treatment.

#### Implications for Professionals

The CSBP Task Force Report clearly defines the need for every professional to first and foremost understand the developmental progress of every child. This is essential to working with children. In many instances, simply learning about interpersonal boundaries and limits is enough to begin managing inappropriate behaviors.

The report also makes it clear that professionals understand the development of children's sexual behavior as well. The knowledge of working with children is very different from the knowledge base needed for working with adults or even adolescents, whose patterns of behavior may have become more established. Professionals will need specialized knowledge of sexual behavior problems (including those that children direct towards themselves as well as others) and to be able to understand the multi-faceted environments in which they occur. Those who provide evaluations need solid skills for accurate diagnosis. It is not enough to focus solely on the problem behavior; professionals must understand the child in the context of their development and the environment in which they live.

In order to address these environmental issues, the report offers ideas for assessments that rely on information from collateral sources (such as family members) and highlights considerations for clinical interviews. It recommends that professionals design treatment strategies that consider the non-sexual challenges a child faces. For example, in some cases, the sexual behavior will be a primary focus of treatment. In other cases, it may be important to begin with a more comprehensive approach that looks at creating a safer environment for that child and teaching the child when and how to reach out for help.

#### Implications for the Field

The CSBP Task Force Report provides guidance to professionals providing assessments and/or treatment for children with sexual behavior problems. Both concise and comprehensive, it reminds readers of the many challenges that professionals face in providing assessment and treatment with CSBP.

By example, the Task Force reminds us that using professional language is essential. Terminology must reflect the context and development of these children, who by nature are less culpable than adults and adolescents. The days of using adult labels to describe youth are--and should be--over. It is important to remember that some problematic behavior by children will become normative and legal in subsequent years.

The report emphasizes the importance of looking at all aspects of the child, including their development, any co-occurring conditions, as well as the other factors that contribute to their health, safety, and wellness. The report also emphasizes the critical decision to include caregivers in the assessment and treatment plans and to always consider the child's environment at every step.

#### Reference

- Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (2006). Report of the Task Force on Children with Sexual Behavior Problems. Beaverton, OR.  
<http://www.atsa.com/pdfs/Report-TFCSBP.pdf>.

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