

NCSBY Glossary of Terms

Adolescent Sex Offenders and Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

Each field of study has terminology specific to its discipline. When professionals from varying disciplines meet to discuss a certain subject, the different terminologies can interfere with communication. This is often the case when different disciplines discuss adolescent sex offenders or children with sexual behavior problems. This Glossary of Terms is a reference document and is designed to aid those working with these populations to communicate more effectively.

Abel Assessment for Sexual Interest (AASI) – a two-part computerized test used to identify deviant sexual interests. The first part of the test is a comprehensive questionnaire of self-reported behaviors, accusations, arrests and convictions, and questions designed to identify cognitive distortions and truthfulness. The second part of the test objectively captures the client's deviant sexual interest while viewing 160 digital images of clothed adults, adolescents and children.

Abstinence – the act of keeping oneself from doing something; i.e. refraining from additional inappropriate or illegal sexual behavior.

Accountability – being responsible for one's conduct, actions, and outcomes.

Actuarial Risk Assessment – a risk assessment based upon factors, which have been researched and demonstrated to be statistically significant in the prediction of sexual re-offense.

Adaptive Coping Response (ACR) – A change in thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors that helps sex offenders deal with risk factors and reduces the risk lapse. Adaptive coping responses help sex offenders avoid re-offending (relapse), and may be general in nature (e.g., talking with a friend who is upset, hurt, or angry) or specific to certain situations (e.g., avoiding children or refraining from masturbation to deviant fantasies).

Adjudication The process for determining a youth's involvement in an offense (guilt) and the actual finding of involvement. Adjudication can be withheld and conditions imposed which, if met, will result in dismissal of the charges.

Adjudicatory Hearing – the fact-finding (trial) phase of a juvenile case in which a judge receives and weighs evidence before deciding whether the youth is responsible for the offense.

Adolescent Sex Offender (ASO) – youth between the ages of 13 to 17 who commit illegal sexual behavior as defined by the sex crime statutes of the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred. (See children with sexual behavior problems).

Adolescent with Sexual Behavior Problems – youth age 13 to 18 with problematic sexual behavior which is not illegal but potentially harmful to the youth, such as compulsive masturbatory behavior.

Aftercare/Reentry – activities and tasks that (1) prepare out-of-home youth for reentry into the specific communities to which they will return; (2) establish the necessary arrangements and linkages with the full range of public and private sector organizations and individuals in the community that can address known risk and protective factors; and (3) ensure the delivery of prescribed services and supervision in the community.

Alford Plea – an Alford Plea allows an alleged offender to admit that there is sufficient evidence to convict him or her at trial without admitting to the offense of record. This type of plea can preclude treatment since it may be difficult to treat someone who has not admitted to an offense.

Arousal – state of increased excitement, function, action or interest; used to describe sexual excitement or interest patterns among ASOs.

Assessment – collection of information to make recommendations about the proper course of action for the process of gathering information to suggest treatment, placement or dispositional decisions. (see Risk Assessment)

Caregivers – any person caring for a child or adolescent in a parental role or substituting for the parental role; responsible for the nurturance, protection, and supervision of the youth.

Children with Sexual Behavior Problems (CSBP) – children 12 years and under whom demonstrate developmentally inappropriate or aggressive sexual behavior. (see Adolescent Sex Offender)

Coercion – exploitation of authority, threats of force, or intimidation to gain cooperation or compliance.

Cognitive Distortions – errors in thinking or irrational thoughts that are used to justify, rationalization, or minimize illegal sexual behavior.

Collaboration – the act of working together in a joint project.

Collateral Contacts – contacts with significant others involved in a case or involved with the youth's life (e.g., teachers, ministers, extended family, etc.), to improve the effectiveness and quality of community supervision.

Commitment – placement of a youth under the supervision of the juvenile justice system. Commitment dispositions range from low-risk nonresidential commitment to maximum-

risk residential commitment, which is similar to sending a convicted adult to jail or prison.

Community Notification – laws which allow or mandate posting publicly accessible information, or actively informing the public about the identity and other personal information about an adjudicated sex offender. (see Megan’s Law)

Community Service – a probation requirement that the youth perform some specific service to the community for a specified period of time; Community service is viewed as a form of restorative justice.

Compulsion – a strong repetitive urge to engage in a behavior.

Confrontation – the act of presenting evidence to a person that is contrary to the persons’ statements or beliefs; may or may not be aggressive in nature.

Consent (to engage in sexual behavior) – agreement including all of the following: 1) understanding what is proposed based on age, maturity, developmental level, functioning and experience; 2) knowledge of societal standards for what is being proposed; 3) awareness of potential consequences and alternatives; 4) assumption that agreement or disagreement will be respected equally; 5) voluntary decision; and 6) mental competence.

Coping – behaviors or thinking patterns used to maintain functioning or psychological integrity under stress. Deliberate chosen ways that people attempt to manage stressful situations (e.g., seeking social support, distraction, seeking information, using substances, etc.), which may be either negative or positive strategies.

Culpable – responsible for a wrong or error; accountable and liable.

Cunnilingus – oral stimulation of the vulva or clitoris.

Delinquent Act – any act committed by a juvenile (generally a person who is subject to juvenile court jurisdiction) that would be a criminal violation of a Federal or State law or local ordinance if committed by an adult.

Delinquent Juvenile – a young person who has been found responsible (equivalent to an adult’s being found guilty of a criminal offense) by a juvenile court judge for having committed a delinquent act and has been adjudicated delinquent.

Denial – an irrational psychological defense mechanism in which facts are not admitted or acknowledged to the self. Distinguished from lying, which is a deliberate falsification, or differences of opinion which are rational disagreements.

Detention – confinement by the State or local authorities in a secure facility. The term is also used in circumstances where a youth is in home confinement while awaiting an adjudication hearing, disposition, or commitment placement.

Developmental Stages – stages from infancy to childhood to adolescent to adulthood reflected by different levels of skill achievement and maturity associated with physical, mental and social competency.

Deviant – thoughts or behavior that is significantly different from the norms of a particular society.

Deviant Arousal – sexual arousal to paraphilia behaviors. *Deviant arousal is a sex offender's pattern of being sexually aroused to deviant sexual themes. Not all sex offenders have deviant arousal patterns. The most common method of assessing deviant arousal is thought phallometric assessment conducted by a trained and qualified sexual abuse treatment specialist.*

Digital – penetration of fingers inserted into another person's anus or vagina.

Disinhibitors – internal or external motivators (stimuli), which decrease reservations or prohibitions against engaging in sexual activities. An example of an internal disinhibitor is a cognitive distortion (e.g. “that 8 year old is coming on to me,” or “she said no, but she really wants to have sex with me”). Alcohol and drug use are examples of external disinhibitors.

Dispositional Hearing – a juvenile case hearing (analogous to a sentencing hearing in criminal court) at which the court receives a pre-disposition report containing information and recommendations to assist in determining the appropriate sanctions, hears from the defense attorney, and makes a determination for a community-based or other sanction, such as probation, or commitment to the custody of the agency responsible for juvenile justice.

Diversion – less formal or non-judicial handling of a delinquency case.

Electronic Monitoring – an automated method of determining compliance with community supervision restrictions through the use of electronic devices. There are three main types of electronic monitoring utilizing different technologies (Crowe, 1998)

Emotional Congruence – the fit between the emotional needs of an individual with the characteristics of children; used to describe a class of motivations for committing sex offenses.

Empathy – the ability to understand the feelings and ideas of the victims and the victim's family members.

Empirical – capable of being verified or disproved by observation or experimented research.

Erotica – materials portraying sexual relationships or drawing attention to sexuality. Although the distinction from pornography may be somewhat subjective, erotica often portrays sexual behavior within the context of a more mutual, personalized and romantic relationship whereas pornography displays explicitly physical, depersonalized and often exaggerated sexual acts.

Evaluation – see “*Assessment*.”

Exploitation – sexual behavior by an individual that involves others in activities that are not in their own best interest in order to achieve self-satisfaction and/or self-gratification.

External Inhibitors – factors outside a youth, such as close adult supervision or placement in a restricted environment, which reduce the youth’s risk to re-offend.

Family Reunification – the process of re-introducing a youth back into the home after removal; it is recommended that this process occur as part of the youth’s treatment program.

Fellatio – oral stimulation of the penis.

Fondling – touching or caressing the genitals, buttocks or breasts under or over clothing for sexual gratification.

Graduated Sanctions – used to document a adolescent sex offender’s violation of a program rule or treatment plan.

Hands-off offense – sexual offenses such as indecent exposure, making obscene phone calls, and “peeping” that do not involve physical contact with the victim; distinguished from hands-on offenses such as rape or molestation.

Incarceration – confine in a secure correctional facility.

Incest – sexual relations between close relatives, such as father and daughter, mother and son, sister and brother. This also includes other relatives, step children, and children of common-law marriages.

Intercourse – penetration of a vagina or anus by the penis.

Internal Inhibitors – those factors within a person that keep them from committing sexual abuse, such as moral restraints, impulse control, or self-control skills.

Intervention – actions designed to correct, control, or prevent future illegal sexual behavior; this can include probation services, treatment services, or placement in a restricted setting.

Investigation – the process of actively seeking facts, about an alleged sexual offense; investigations are typically conducted by law enforcement and/or child protective services in order to determine whether or not an offense was committed.

Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act – a federal mandate enacted in 1994 that requires states to establish stringent registration programs for sex offenders including lifelong registration for offenders classified as “sexual predators.” (see Megan’s Law and Sex Offender Registration)

Jurisdiction – the authority given to the juvenile court by state statute.

Juvenile – a young person who has not yet attained the age at which he or she should be treated as an adult for purposes of criminal law. Under the federal Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act, a “juvenile” means an individual who is 17 years of age or younger.

Lapse – an emotion fantasy, thought, or behavior that is part of a sex offender’s cycle and relapse pattern. Lapses are not sex offenses. They are precursors or risk factors for sex offenses. Lapses are not failures and are often considered as valuable learning experiences. For example, a lapse might involve engaging in a known risk behavior, while a relapse would involve an actual re-offense.

Levels of Care – (also known as graduated sanctions) an accountability-based, graduated series of sanctions (including incentives, treatment, and services) applicable to juveniles within the juvenile system to hold such juveniles accountable for their actions and to protect communities from the effects of juvenile delinquency by providing appropriate sanctions for every act for which a juvenile is adjudicated delinquent.

Masturbation – manual stimulation of the genitals to initiate, respond to, or sustain sexual arousal and/or to achieve orgasm.

Masturbatory reconditioning – a behavioral conditioning technique designed to reduce deviant sexual interest and attraction patterns; the technique involves pairing appropriate masturbatory fantasies with arousal, and pairing inappropriate fantasies with refractory period arousal limitations. Masturbatory recondition is primarily used for adults with paraphilias.

Megan’s Law – The first amendment to the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offenders Act. This was passed in October 1996 and requires states to allow public access to information about sex offenders in the community. This federal mandate was named after Megan Kanka, a seven-year-old girl who was raped and murdered by a twice-convicted child molester in her New Jersey neighborhood. (see Jacob Wetterling and Community Notification)

Minimization – an attempt by the offender to downplay the extent and effect of the illegal sexual behavior.

Molestation – a legal term used by some states to refer to illegal sexual behaviors toward minors such as fondling; may include behaviors such as showing pornography to minors or making lewd proposals to minors.

Multi-Disciplinary Team – a group of professionals who review the investigation, prosecution, intervention and management of cases of illegal sexual behavior by youth; Typically includes representation from law enforcement, child protection services, mental health, lawyers, medicine, and juvenile justice.

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) – has been designated as an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention "Blueprint" program for violence prevention and is designed as an intensive community-based protocol for intervening with seriously delinquent youth and their families. MST is a home-based service and treats the problematic behavior of youth in an individualized and thorough manner, such that MST therapists have frequent

contact with the family and are available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. A primary focus of MST is to teach the primary caregiver how to help their child make changes.

Notification – (see Community Notification)

Offense – a violation of federal, state, tribal, or municipal law, statute or ordinance.

Opportunistic – taking advantage of the immediate circumstances or the availability of an opportunity to commit illegal sexual behavior, such as a teenager molesting a child while babysitting.

Paraphilia – sexual deviance that meets Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM-IV) diagnostic criteria. Children under the age of 12 rarely meet diagnostic criteria. The behaviors often involve a pattern of recurrent, compulsive, or intense sexual urges and behaviors involving unusual sexual behaviors or targets, such as young children. These specific targets or behaviors may be necessary for an individual to experience sexual arousal, or may co-exist with more normative sexual targets and behaviors. It is important to note that not all paraphilias involve illegal behavior, and not all-illegal sexual behavior involves paraphilias. Engaging in a norm-violating sexual behavior is not equivalent to having a paraphilia. For example, most youth who engage in sexual behavior with a prepubescent child do not meet criteria for pedophilia. In general, only older adolescents (16 to 18) are eligible for diagnoses of paraphilias. Many specific paraphilias, such as pedophilia, have specific DSM criteria. However, there are ranges of less common paraphilias that do not have specific DSM criteria.

Bestiality – sexual interest or arousal to animals.

Exhibitionism – a sexual deviancy that meets DSM criteria and involves a pattern of urges and or behavior involving deliberately exposing one’s genitals for purposes of excitement or sexual arousal. Exhibitionism is distinct from other forms of adolescent self-exhibition (such as “mooning” or exposing body parts in response to social or peer group influences), in that exhibitionism involves more compulsive urges and is often a solitary behavior.

Fetishism – a sexual deviancy that meets DSM criteria and involves 1) sexual interest in a particular object; 2) sexual fixation on an object; 3) dependence on an object for sexual satisfaction or arousal.

Frotteurism – a sexual deviancy which meets DSM criteria and involves bumping, touching, or rubbing against others for sexual satisfaction without the other persons knowledge or consent.

Hebophilia – a paraphilia involving compulsive adult sexual interest in young adolescents

Pedophilia – a paraphilia that meets DSM criteria involving a pattern of intense sexual interests and/or behaviors involving pre-pubescent children (generally age 13 years or younger). The individual with Pedophilia must be age 16 years or older and at least 5 years older than the child. Unlike some other paraphilias, pedophilic actions are thought to be invariably exploitative and abusive. Most youth who commit sexual offenses against children are not believed to meet criteria for pedophilia.

Sexual Masochism – a paraphilia that meets DSM criteria, which involves the act of being humiliated, beaten, bound, or otherwise made to suffer.

Sexual Sadism – a paraphilia which meets DSM criteria which involves acts in which the individual derives sexual excitement from the psychological or physical suffering (including humiliation) of the victim.

Transvestic Fetishism – a paraphilia that meets DSM criteria, which involves cross-dressing.

Voyeurism – a disorder meeting DSM paraphilia criteria and involving a pattern of urges and behaviors for obtaining sexual gratification from seeing sex organs or sex acts or from attempting to view others without their knowledge. May be referred to as “peeping-Tom” offenses. Voyeurism is distinct from some forms of adolescent “peeping” behaviors, such as “peeping” which occurs in response to peer pressure or social situations. Voyeurism is more often a compulsive and solitary activity.

Pathology – structural and functional deviations from the norm that constitute disease or psychological malfunctioning.

Perpetrator – the person committing an offense or crime (may be sexual or nonsexual).

Phallometry/Phallometric Assessment – Plethysmograph

Plea Bargain – a legal term for negotiating charges or dispositions in order to avoid trial on the original charge(s) in return for a guilty plea.

Plethysmograph – a device that measures erectile responses in males or vascular changes in females to both appropriate and inappropriate sexual stimulus material. Use of the plethysmograph with ASOs is controversial, and should not be used with children.

Polygraph – a device measuring physiological reactions such as heart rate and perspiration. Proponents believe that these reactions can be interpreted to determine whether an interviewee is responding truthfully. Although polygraph interviews are strongly advocated in some jurisdictions, scientific opinion has been generally critical of the evidence supporting their validity in determining the truth. Use of the polygraph with ASOs is controversial.

Pornography – the presentation of sexually explicit material in photographs, literature, art, motion pictures, etc. Although the distinction from erotica may be somewhat subjective, pornography often displays explicitly physical, depersonalized and often exaggerated sexual acts whereas erotica portrays sexual behavior within the context of a more mutual, personalized and romantic relationship.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – a psychological disorder meeting DSM criteria including a) presence of a traumatic event followed by lasting symptoms including b) re-experiencing the event, c) avoidance or numbing, and d) hyper arousal.

Probable Cause – a legal term for sufficient basis to cause a reasonable person to believe that more likely than not an offense has been committed and a person under investigation has either committed it or been the victim of it.

Probation – a court ordered disposition through which an adjudicated youth is placed under the control, supervision, and care of a probation field staff member in lieu of confinement, as long as the youth meets certain standards of conduct.

Problematic Sexual Behavior – sexual behavior that does not involve sexual deviancy or gross violation of others, and may not be illegal, but still reflects poor judgment, controls, or appreciation of potential consequences.

Psychosexual Evaluation – a comprehensive evaluation of an adolescent sex offender to assess the risk of recidivism and make recommendations for treatment. A psychosexual evaluation usually includes obtaining information from multiple sources with a focus on criminal, sexual, and family history. The evaluation may also include assessment of specific sexual interests and behaviors.

Puberty – the stage in life at which a child’s secondary sexual characteristics (i.e. the appearance of physical maturity) develop.

Punishment – penalty for a fault, offense, or violation; penalty inflicted on an offender by judicial procedure.

Rape – illegal sexual behavior as defined by the relevant state rape statute. Typically involves sexual penetration without consent including sexual penetration obtained by force, threat or incapacitation, or sexual penetration of someone who is unable to give consent, such as a younger child or incompetent person.

Recidivism – an officially detected recurrence of illegal behavior after a previous adjudication (e.g., arrests, charges, convictions, child protection reports, etc.). Distinguished from relapse or re-offense in that recidivism involves only detected and illegal events.

Relapse – complete or nearly complete return to a former problematic or illegal behavior. Distinguished from recidivism in that it involves both detected and undetected events, and from re-offense in that it involves both illegal and inappropriate events.

Relapse Prevention – a cognitive-behavioral intervention model for risk management that considers internal self-management and external supervision in regard to precipitating and perpetuating factors such as risk situations and risk related cognitions. Relapse prevention interventions teach clients to identify chains of risk factors, thinking patterns, and behavioral and cognitive sequences in order to identify and disrupt offense patterns.

Restitution – repairing harm caused by a behavior. Among ASOs this may involve restitution to the victim (e.g., apology) or restitution to the community (e.g., community service).

Restorative Justice – focuses on the repair of the harm to the victim and the community, as well as the improvement of pro-social competencies of the offender, as a result of a damaging act. Dispositions are focused on restitution and competency development rather than being exclusively punitive.

Reintegration – The gradual re-entry from a restricted, highly supervised environment to a less structured environment.

Reunification – a gradual and well-supervised procedure in which an adolescent sex offender is re-integrated back into the home where children are present.

Risk Assessment – the process of assigning a probability for a future behavior, such as a sexual offense, to an individual. This may be done on the basis of subjective clinical impressions, objective actuarial methods, or valid reliable risk assessment instruments. The accuracy of risk assessments for ASOs and CSBPs is currently undetermined.

Clinical Risk Assessment – the process of estimating risk based upon interview impressions, personality testing, or other similar clinical assessment procedures. Clinical risk assessment has been strongly criticized as lacking predictive accuracy, and in some studies performs no better than chance.

Sanctions – a penalty, punishment, loss of reward, or coercive intervention connected to a violation of a law or rule as a means of enforcement.

Satiation – a behavioral conditioning technique designed to reduce deviant sexual interest and attraction patterns. The technique involves pairing images of the deviant interest with boredom through prolonged repetition of the image until it loses its appeal.

Sex Offender Registration – laws requiring sex offenders to submit and keep current certain personal identifying information, such as photographs and current address for purposes of maintaining a list of registered sex offenders in the community. Sex offender registration laws may or may not apply to adolescents, and different states have different inclusion criteria and provisions for adolescents. Registration may or may not involve public notification or public access depending upon the jurisdiction.

Sexual Abuse – engaging in sexual behaviors that violate or exploit another person; sexual behavior without consent, without equality, or with coercion.

Sexual Aggression – sexually abusive behavior involving intimidation, threats of physical harm, or use of force.

Sexual Assault – Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury upon the person of another, when coupled with an apparent present ability to do so, and any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm, constitutes an assault.

Sexual Harassment – unwanted abusive, intrusive, offensive, or coercive sexual propositions, language or innuendo towards another. May involve a single severe event or a pattern of less severe events that continue despite indication that they are unwanted and/or offensive.

Sexual Interest – categorical characteristics of fantasy, stimuli, or behaviors associated with an individual's sexual arousal.

Sexual Offense – sexual behavior which constitutes a legal offense; criminal or illegal sexual behavior.

Sodomy – penetration of an anus or, in some definitions, the mouth by a penis.

Status Offense – acts that violate the law, only refer to individuals with juvenile status.

Thinking Errors – see “*Cognitive Distortions.*”

Treatment – a planned and organized intervention strategy designed to improve the prognosis, function, or outcome.

Victim – any person harmed or made to suffer; object of a crime or offense.

Wrap Around Services – a collaborative effort involving agencies and schools to provide a safe, nurturing environment for adolescent sex offenders who are at risk of being placed out-of-county or who are re-entering their community.

Youth – time of life prior to adulthood.

These sources were used for the definitions listed above: Black’s Law Dictionary, Center for Sex Offender Management Glossary of Terms Used in the Management and Treatment of Sexual Offenders (www.csom.org), Webster’s Dictionary, and the Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition.

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