

Sexually Aggressive Youth Program Parent Handout

Rev 05/14/09

Welcome to the sexually aggressive youth program at Mid-Ohio Psychological Services. Your child has been referred to this program by either a juvenile court or a child protective services agency. Our program attempts to work closely with these agencies to ensure that your child addresses the sexual issues that resulted in their referral to us. As a condition of your child's participation in our program, you will be required to sign releases of information to facilitate our communication with the courts and with child protective services agencies.

Youth who are referred to our program usually participate in the program for one to three years. It is difficult to know at the beginning of treatment exactly how long a youth will take to complete the program. Some youth actively engage in treatment, have relatively few treatment needs, and/or have many healthy supportive people in their lives. These youth often can complete the program in a year. Other youth find portions of the program more difficult, have complicated treatment needs, or have few, if any, adults who are able to support and guide them. These youth often require several years of intervention before benefiting from our services. Your participation is likely to reduce the time that your child is in treatment and is likely to increase the effectiveness of the treatment. You are strongly encouraged to actively participate in your child's treatment.

Most families of the youth served by our sexually aggressive youth program fall into one of three broad categories: disengaged families, engaged families, and families working towards reunification.

Disengaged families are families that have chosen to not participate in their child's treatment for many possible reasons. Although treatment is typically quicker and more effective with full family involvement, our agency does work with youth who do not have engaged families. In many cases, youth from disengaged families live with foster parents with no plan for returning to any of their family members' homes.

Engaged families are fully involved in their youth's treatment, typically attending sessions at least one time a month or more and actively reviewing their youth's homework assignments. It is our hope that most families will be involved in their youth's treatment and seek feedback from their youth's primary therapist. Engaged families attempt to facilitate safety planning, are likely to continue to support their child after completion of the program, and help their child transition to adulthood. We ask engaged families to participate in therapy to help the youth to identify the dynamics which contributed to their offending behavior, to identify specific coping skills for the youth to use in their home and in the community, and to provide feedback to the therapist about how well the youth is using the skills being learned in treatment. With engaged families, there is no assumption that the youth will return to the home on a permanent basis, however the youth is likely to continue to be actively engaged in the family at some level.

Families seeking reunification are expected to engage in treatment at a much more intensive level. Family reunification includes having some contact between the offender and the identified victim or potential victims. Family reunification requires the coordination of services among various providers including the court, child protective services, the victim's therapist, and the offender's therapist. Additionally, families working towards reunification may require additional therapeutic intervention including individual counseling for each of the family members, counseling involving various combinations of family members, and eventually counseling involving the full family. These combinations usually must be completed before the offender and victim are allowed to meet together for a therapeutic session. Once a therapeutic session occurs between the offender and victim, the success of that session will be assessed and a determination will be made as to whether further contact is appropriate. If further contact is to be facilitated, rules regarding this further contact will be established. These rules usually include gradual and limited increases in the frequency and length of contact between the offender and victim under highly structured and supervised conditions. Additionally, specific safety planning for the family is required as a condition of the reunification process. Typically, youth do not return to the home where the victim is living for at least six months to a year after the first therapeutic session between the offender and victim, and only after successful incremental contact has occurred. The family reunification process is explained in more detail in the handout *Family Reunification Phases* that can be obtained from your youth's therapist or from the agency's web page (www.mopsohio.com).

Program Expectations:

While your youth is participating in the sexually aggressive youth program, they are expected to complete four homework assignments. Depending on your child's individual abilities, these assignments may be completed in a written format, verbally with a therapist, or in some other fashion. For some youth, these assignments can be done independently between group sessions. For most youth however, some assistance is necessary and is usually provided with individual counseling which occurs between group counseling sessions. You are strongly encouraged to work with your child in completing these assignments as well.

Each week, your child is expected to work on their homework assignments. At the end of each session, your child should clearly know what their next assignment is. All youth will complete the following homework assignments: *Autobiography*, *Why Did I Do It Worksheet*, *Victim Empathy Worksheets*, and *Relapse Prevention Plan*. If your child does not complete homework assignments on a consistent basis, their program of recovery will be slowed down. Additionally, their probation officer or caseworker will be notified of their failure to comply with treatment expectations.

In addition to the formal homework assignments identified above, each youth will be expected to participate in other therapeutic exercises. This may include learning basic sexual anatomy, practicing social skills, and eventually developing dating skills. Additionally, each youth will be expected to complete safety plans for any high risk situation that they encounter. Any time a youth is allowed a greater level of independence or experiences a new environment, the youth should first complete a safety plan.

Safety Plans:

To help your youth complete a safety plan, it is important to understand the key elements of an effective plan. To help you remember what constitutes a safety plan, remember the word ADD. ADD stands for Accountability, "Doability", and "Does it work".

Accountability means that there must be some way of proving that the safety plan was used and to prove that the youth did not engage in inappropriate behavior. "Doability" means that the safety plan must be something that the youth will actually follow through with. That is, the youth has whatever they need to actually use the safety plan and they are committed to actually doing whatever is included in the plan. "Does it work" means that the plan actually gets in the way of the youth's ability to engage in unhealthy or inappropriate behavior. In reviewing your youth's safety plan, please ensure that these three criteria are met.

It is our hope that we can work closely with you in facilitating the best treatment for your youth. If you ever have questions about what is going on in treatment or how you might better be able to help your child we strongly encourage you to contact your youth's primary therapist or their supervisor.