

My Goal in Appearing

Who Commits Sexual Offences

The importance and role of risk assessment and differentiating risk

Case contextualization

The importance and role of treatment

High risk case example

The problem of unreported sexual abuse

Recommendations for Consideration

- Public policy should be evidence based and the specific policies grounded and tied to research findings.
- Assessments that evaluate offender risk and need should be a fundamental component that informs sentencing, that guides decisions related to incarceration versus community alternatives and that orients to appropriate case and risk management planning (supervision and intervention).

- The court should be empowered to sentence based on the context of the specific case before them. The type of offence, the relationship between the victim and the offender, the victim's wishes, the assessed level of risk of the offender, the treatability of the offender and the appropriateness of alternative measures (that consider factors such as mental illness, cultural diversity, public safety) should all be factors that guide sentencing. Thus sentencing should be case specific versus based on pre-determined sentencing policies.
- Registration practices should be grounded in the research literature about what we know about sexual offender recidivism. To register every individual convicted for a sexual crime is likely to contribute to an inability to adequately manage and maintain registries. For example, decisions to register or the type of registration should be grounded in the assessment of the individual's risk and the offence type. The period of time in which registration is required should be guided by the research on aging. Registration time periods should also have the ability to be altered in response to the research on treatment outcome and adjusted down for individuals who do not pose a high risk, who have completed treatment and who have demonstrated a significant time out in the community living offence free.
- Evidenced based interventions should be accessible to offenders in federal and provincial correctional institutions as well as in the community. Treatment should be consistent with the 'what works' literature and known best practices. Crime reduction and increased community safety will be supported through an investment in evidenced based treatment programs delivered and/or supervised by appropriately trained mental health professionals. This would require an enhanced commitment to provide psychological services in correctional institutions and accessible for community treatment programs and to have psychologists as an integral part of treatment planning, treatment program development, delivery, supervision and evaluation. Despite much of the 'what works' literature being developed by Canadian researchers, practitioners, and academics, federal corrections has moved away from these principles, and, if risk is to be appropriately attended to this must be addressed.
- Invest in the provision of Aboriginal specific healing services in the community to provide culturally relevant and meaningful interventions for Aboriginal people interested in this path.
- If we are to address the large picture of sexual abuse and truly invest in protecting children there must be the foresight, will and strength of conviction to see sexual abuse as not just a criminal justice issue but a public health issue and to begin to support the development and implementation of intervention programs that have the potential to address the 90% of sexual abuse cases that go unreported through accountability versus punitive oriented approaches.

- Enhancing community safety and wellness starts with proactive prevention efforts, which have been found to be more cost effective and beneficial in terms of crime reduction when compared with reactive (tough on crime) approaches. Funding allocated at high risk youth and invoking primary prevention programs would have a higher likelihood of making a meaningful difference in altering the course of at risk children, reducing victims and increasing the safety and wellness in the community. Proactive approaches could include early psychologist intervention for at risk youth, educational and job training programs, specific interventions for community based mental health and substance use problems, and specific interventions to enhance Aboriginal cultural identity.
- Support funding for research into sexual abuse, treatment and risk management and prevention initiatives. This will allow for an evolving knowledge base to continue to ensure evidenced based practice in policy development, prevention planning and treatment and risk management services.