

**Psychosexual Assessment of Chronically Mentally Ill Sexual Abusers:
Informed Responses to Complex Challenges**

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Individuals who have been diagnosed with severe, chronic mental illness, such as Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective and Bipolar Disorder, and who also demonstrate co-occurring sexual offending behaviors present with clinically and systemically complex issues. A comprehensive assessment that integrates a thorough examination across multiple and potentially synergistically-influencing dimensions of the individual, as well as a focused evaluation of the interacting strengths, weaknesses and ultimate limits of the mental health service system within which they are living and recovering, is essential in order to identify and execute effective treatment and risk management strategies for members of this challenging population.

This workshop will outline a dynamic framework for, and examine informed strategies of, a client-tailored assessment process that will guide clinicians to accurately assess the special treatment and risk management needs of those sexual abusers who present with co-morbid persistent, serious mental illness. Topics will include:

- an examination of the differential diagnoses of co-morbid psychiatric conditions that can mimic, intensify or disguise paraphilic and/or criminal sexual behaviors
- special considerations of the assessment engagement process including effective identification and management of the mentally ill individual's capacity for and tolerance of the interview and testing procedures
- the critical role of a thorough, detailed psychosocial, developmental, and sexual history
- the application of standard measures of static and dynamic sexual offense risk to the population of the persistently mentally ill
- creating a working and utilitarian hypothesis regarding the relationship between an individual's principle mental illness and their problematic sexual behavior
- identifying the specific training, support and resource needs of the service provision system within which the psychiatric client is embedded
- an exploration of individual as well as service system case examples that will illustrate the necessity and efficacy of a comprehensive and tailored approach to addressing the special needs of chronically mentally ill sex offenders and their service provision system

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This comprehensive, tailored and systemically integrated assessment practice is based upon the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health's Forensic Division approach to managing the special needs of the psychiatric population they serve who present with problematic and/or sexual offending behaviors. To date, utilizing this specialized assessment framework to guide clinical treatment and risk management planning for chronically mentally ill sexual abusers has contributed to overall improvements in their clinical care. This evolving best practice in special population sex offender assessment has led to more informed treatment planning, successful transition of clinically complex individuals to community settings, more accurate and targeted risk management planning and the establishment of a range of effective service provision responses to the special needs of this often difficult to manage sub-population of sexual abusers.