

**A Developmental Approach to Assessing Children & Adolescents with  
Sexual Behavior Problems**

Craig Latham, Ph.D.

Actuarial assessments of children and adolescents enjoy great popularity with consumers and even with some clinicians despite several shortcomings. First, under the best of circumstances, actuarial assessments provide only a number (e.g., “45%”) or categorical (e.g. “low”) prediction of risk. Dynamic risk factors, to the extent they are assessed at all, are so generic as to be useless in treatment planning. Second, there is increasing evidence that actuarial assessment techniques do not work with children and adolescents in even this limited fashion because, as our own Mark Chaffin recently said in one of his pithy posts to the listserv, “with kids it's the social environment, not the child's psyche, that's the most useful focus when it comes to recommending what needs to be done. It's what the family systems people and social workers call context and what the behavior analysts call functional analysis.” This workshop will explore the reasons why actuarial assessment is ineffective with children and adolescents, and it will present an assessment model based on the social-ecological model recommended in the *ATSA Report of the Task Force on Children with Sexual Behavior Problems*.