



Catholic Charities' Family Growth Program Now Offering Services Targeting Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth

In addition to specialized counseling services for very young children and their parents (PCIT) and middle-school adolescents (TF-CBT), clinicians at Catholic Charities' Family Growth Program in Monmouth have completed the University of Oklahoma training in Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) and can now offer a full complement of treatment approaches.

PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIOR (PSB) IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

While sexual exploration and play are a natural part of childhood sexual development, some sexual behaviors indicate *more than harmless curiosity*.

In cases where these behaviors pose a risk to the safety or well-being of the child as well as to other children, it is imperative for families and communities to intervene and mitigate through proper identification and treatment.

HOW ARE THESE BEHAVIORS DEFINED?

Problematic sexual behaviors in youth are defined as child or adolescent initiated behaviors typically involving sexual body parts that are:

- Developmentally inappropriate
- Potentially harmful to self or other and/or illegal

Greater than one-third of sexual offenses against child victims are committed by other youth. PSB primarily occurs with other children known by the youth, with a quarter of victims being family members. Few sexual offenses of youth involve strangers.

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS

Effective community based treatments for youth with PSB, the child victims and their families have the following characteristics:

- **Community collaboration.** Juvenile justice, child welfare, treatment services systems, schools, child advocacy centers and others collaborate to identify children with problematic sexual behaviors, assess risk and engage families in evidence-based treatment.
- **Clinical services teams trained in evidence-based treatment.**
- **Active parent and caregiver involvement.** Helping these children and youth requires active engagement of the family.
- **Agency and public policies** that are consistent with research outcomes.

When accomplished effectively, programs can better sustain the safety, health and well-being for the children and families in the community.

For more information about treatment approaches for PSB, contact
Catholic Charities' Family Growth Program at **732-747-9660**.

Community Problem Requires Community Response: The Role of Community Stakeholders

As PSB of youth commonly occur with children within their social network, *lack of community collaboration leads to:*

- Failing to identify youth in need of services
- Families divided, both physically and emotionally
- Fragmented services
- Risk to the community members



In contrast, *community collaboration and implementation of evidence-based services* for youth with PSB can lead to:

- Decreased child symptoms (PSB and trauma)
- Increased pro-social behaviors in children and youth
- Decreased parent/family stress
- Improved safety and well-being for child and family
- Sustainable and safe reunification of family members
- Improved placement stability for youth involved in Child Welfare system
- Decreased recidivism for youth involved in juvenile justice
- Decreased costs for placement, services and interventions

COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Historically, no *individual* community-system has responsibility for coordinated care for all youth with PSB. Implementing evidence-based treatment requires service agencies to *effectively plan, develop and enact* a community decision-making process related to care and treatment of youth and their families.

Individuals and professionals involved in this process:

- Caregivers (*bio/Kinship/Foster/Adoptive Parents*)
- Child Protective Services
- Law Enforcement
- Juvenile Justice (*judges, prosecutors/defense, probation*)
- Victim Advocacy
- Behavioral and Mental Health
- School Personnel
- Medical Providers
- Other Professionals (*speech therapists, occupational therapists, rehab specialists*)
- Faith-Based Communities/Agencies

COMMUNITY GOALS AND OUTCOMES

- Effective and consistent identification of youth and families dealing with PSB
- Effective and consistent referral of identified youth to evidence-based services
- Sustainable implementation of evidence-based services
- Family-centered response to all impacted by PSB of youth
- Coordinated response across agencies and systems

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