

Treatment for Children and Young Adolescents with Sexual Behavior Problems

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General Definition

- *Sexual behavior problems (SBP) are defined as child(ren)-initiated behaviors that involve sexual body parts (i.e., genitals, anus, buttocks, or breasts) in a manner that is developmentally inappropriate and potentially harmful to themselves or others.*

Silovsky & Bonner (2003)

General Definition

- *Children with SBP are defined as youth 12 years and younger*
- *Although the term “sexual” is utilized, the intentions and motivations for these behaviors may be unrelated to sexual gratification*

Sexual Play is...

- *Exploratory*
- *Spontaneous*
- *Intermittent*
- *By mutual agreement*
- *With child of similar age, size, developmental level*
- *Not accompanied by anger, fear, strong anxiety*

In Contrast, Sexual Behavior Problems Are:

- *Greater frequency or duration than developmentally expected*
- *Frequency excludes normal childhood activities*
- *Do not decrease with typically effective parenting strategies*
- *Harmful to the child or others*

In Contrast, Sexual Behavior Problems Are:

- *Between children of significantly divergent ages/developmental abilities*
- *Coercive or aggressive and/or*
- *Elicits fear and anxiety in other children*

Incidence and Prevalence

- *No national figures available on the number of children with SBPs*
- *Last decade seen an increase in number of children referred to CPS, juvenile services, and treatment*
- *Unsure if this represents an actual increase in behaviors or increase in awareness and reporting*

Summary of Children with SBP: Characteristics

- *Diverse types of SBP*
- *Diverse race, gender, family factors, SES, maltreatment histories, co-morbid problems*
- *More diverse than Adult and Adolescent Sexual Offenders, particularly gender*
- *No profile of children with SMP*
- *Preschool children may have more frequent SBP and more significant co-morbid problems*

Common Characteristics Children with SBP

- *Sexual Behavior Problems*
- *Other Behavior Problems*
- *Internalizing Symptoms*
- *Limited Coping Skills*
- *Social Problems*
- *Parent-Child Relationship*
- *Home/Community Environment*

Important Considerations for Treatment Planning

- *History of SBPs*
 - *Interpersonal, aggression/coercion, frequency, duration, age started, violation of law, impulsiveness of the acts*
 - *Environmental factors before, during, and after*
- *Trauma experiences and reactions*
 - *PTSD symptoms*
 - *Triggers for SBP*
 - *Ongoing exposure to stress and trauma*

Important Considerations for Treatment Planning

- *Behavior problems*
 - *Impulsive driven, e.g., ADHD*
 - *Other aggressive or delinquent acts*
 - *Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder*
- *Learning problems, Cognitive Development, Social Emotional Development, Moral Reasoning*

Important Considerations for Treatment Planning

- *Stability of family*
- *Family environment and support*
- *Legal involvement, perceived dangerous of behavior*
- *Community and school supervision and support*

Focused Assessment

- *History of SBP and CSBI*
- *Trauma history and symptoms*
- *Social, family, developmental, and school history and KBIT*
- *Emotional and behavioral functioning and BASC or CBCL (Parent, Teacher, and Child)*
- *Follow up with more intense assessment as needed*

Treatment of Children with SBP: Studies of Efficacy

- *Few scientifically rigorous studies*
 - *Relapse Prevention vs. Expressive*
 - *Both groups demonstrated improved adaptive functioning (Pithers & Gray et al., 1998)*
 - *CBP vs. Dynamic Play Therapy Group*
 - *Both groups demonstrated reduced reoccurrences of SBP (Bonner et al., 1999)*
 - *CBP Within Subject Design (Preschool)*
 - *Reduced frequency of SBP, Need to address co-occurring conditions (Silovsky et al., in review)*

New Reports of Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors After Completion of Treatment

- *Dynamic Play*
 - 35 children completed at least 9 out of 12 sessions
 - 6 reports of new inappropriate sexual behavior
 - 17% recidivism rate
- *Cognitive-Behavioral*
 - 34 children completed at least 9 out of 12 sessions
 - 5 reports of new inappropriate sexual behavior
 - 15% recidivism rate

(Bonner et al., 1999)

Treatment Guidelines

- *Saunders, Berliner, & Hanson (2004). Child Physical Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for Treatment (Revised Report April 26, 2004). Charleston, SC: National Crimes Victims Research and Treatment Center.*
- <http://www.musc.edu/cvc/>

Format of Treatment School-Age Group

- *Open ended—Individually Determined*
- *Child's Knowledgeable/Behavior Rated Weekly*
- *Monthly Parent-Child Groups*
- *Sexual Behavior Problems Rated Weekly*
- *Home Practice Activities*
- *Graduation Party with Caps and Certificates*

SBP Treatment Issues

- *Sexual Behavior Problems*
- *Other Behavioral Problems*
- *Internalizing Symptoms*
- *Limited Coping*
- *Social Problems*
- *Parent-Child Relationship*
- *Home/Community Environment*

SBP Treatment Goals

- *Preventing future sexual behaviors*
- *Developmentally appropriate knowledge about sex*
- *Taking responsibility for SBP*
- *Improvement in empathy (depend on dev.)*
- *Reduction of other behavior problems /
Improved parenting*

Potential Treatment Goals

- *Abuse prevention skills*
- *Developing social skills*
 - *Increase appropriate interpersonal activities*
- *Management of anger/aggression*
- *Improving self-control*
- *Control of stress and anxiety*
 - *Improved coping skills*
- *Improvement in caregiver-child relationship*

SBP Treatment

Topics

- *Acknowledge sexual behavior*
- *Knowledge about societal rules and laws*
- *Rules for sexual behavior*

Techniques

- *Sexual Behavior Rules*
- *Letter of acknowledgement/apology*
- *Projective story cards*

CSBP: Sexual Behavior Rules

- *It is not OK to touch other people's private parts.*
- *It is not OK to show private parts.*
- *It is not OK for other people to touch your private parts.*
- *It is OK to touch your private parts in private.*
- *It is not OK to make others feel uncomfortable with your sexual language or behavior.*

Anxiety Management

- *Relaxation training (“Getting your body to calm down”)*
 - *Controlled breathing*
 - *Balloon in, balloon out or bubble breaths*
 - *Practice with cup*
 - *Provide feedback*
 - *Respect personal boundaries*
- *Stress Management*
- *Exercise*

Turtle Technique for Impulse Control: All Ages

- *Story and Puppets*
- *Steps*
 - *Strong Feelings*
 - *Stop, Go into Shell*
 - *Calm down, Relax*
 - *Think*
 - *Evaluate*
 - *Act*
- *Stop, Think, and Relax Game*

Impulse Control for Older Children

- *STOP*
 - *Stop (and Relax)*
 - *Think*
 - *Options*
 - *Plan*

Impulse Control: School-Age Children

- *Problem Solving Skills*
 - *Weekly report for generalization to daily life*
“How was your week?”
 - *Identifying problem*
 - *Brainstorm solutions*
 - *Evaluate solutions—examine consequences*
 - *Choose one*
 - *After do, evaluate outcome*

Sexual Abuse Prevention

- *Sexual Behavior Rules*
- *Safety plan*
- *Not just “stranger danger”*
- *Appropriate dating/healthy relationships*

Sex Education for School-Age Children

- *Body parts*
- *Functions of body parts*
- *Appropriate interactions*
- *Responses to others*
- *Sex-roles*
- *Homosexuality*
- *STDs*

CSBP Caregivers' Group—Topics

- *Safety/Supervision Measures*
- *Sexual Development in Children*
- *Sexual Behavior Rules*
- *Sexual Rules in the Home*
- *Parental Emotional and Behavioral Reaction to SBP*
- *Talking to Your Child about Sexuality*
- *Boundaries, Modesty*

CSBP Caregivers' Group—Topics

- *Communicating with Other Adults in Child's Life, e.g., Teachers, Day Camp Leaders*
- *Non-Physical forms of Discipline, Behavior Management Strategies*
- *Supporting Children's use of Impulse Control Strategies*
- *Communicating with Children*
- *Sexual Abuse of Children*
- *Caregivers' support system*

Caregivers' Group—Format

- *Psycho-Educational*
- *Directive*
- *Mutual Support*
 - *Issues with parents who are divorced*

Making Home a Safe Place for Children with SBPs

- *Close SUPERVISION*
- *Bathe and sleep alone*
- *No exposure to sexual material*
- *Maintain adults' privacy*
- *Adults use modesty*
- *Communicate clear rules about privacy*
- *Include all members of the family*

Criteria for Graduation School-Age Group

- *Regular attendance*
- *No sexual behavior problems for 3 months*
- *Know and apply the Sexual Behavior Rules*
- *Completion of the treatment modules*
- *Satisfactory attention and participation*
- *Appropriate social interaction in group*
- *Caregiver demonstrates supervision and support*

Conclusions

- *Not all sexual behavior in children is problematic*
- *Not all sexually abused children have a sexual behavior problem*
- *Treatment should be theoretically based and developmentally appropriate*
- *Parental involvement in treatment is critical*
- *Various therapeutic interventions have been found effective*
- *Further research needed*