

# NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



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Dear Colleague,

Thanks to you, we have successfully completed our first year of NEARI's e-Newsletter. We can tell that you download the issues, so we hope that you find the newsletter interesting and useful to your work.

This month we are highlighting the importance of looking at the family and the environment surrounding the youth we work with. If we want these kids to succeed, we know we need to reduce the risk factors for offending behaviors. But we also need to give them every support and protective factor to ensure that they succeed.

Joann Schladale's article is a great resource, but we also recommend her 10-day certification course for working with sexually abusive youth. For more information, see the box (top right).

## A Collaborative Approach to Stop Sexual Harm by Youth

Joann Schladale leads an excellent 10-day certification program titled, "*A Collaborative Approach to Stop Sexual Harm by Youth*." NEARI sponsors this certification program each year in Western Massachusetts.

The next certification program is scheduled for October 19-30, 2009 and is limited to 25 students. The cost of the certification program is \$1,600.

For more information or to register, please contact Diane Langelier at (413) 540-0712, ext. 14 or at [DCLinMA@aol.com](mailto:DCLinMA@aol.com).

## Family Support of Adolescent Change is Vital

by David S. Prescott, LICSW

### The Issue

Engaging the families of youth in treatment can be both incredibly rewarding and often challenging. There are few resources for professionals seeking to build safety and stability in the home and even fewer that focus on reconciling and reunifying the family.

### The Research

Joann Schladale is among those few authors who have written extensively about working with the families of adolescents who have sexually abused. In an article from "The Forum" (summer 2005), a quarterly newsletter produced by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Schladale illustrates both the importance of and strategies for working with families.

As always, we welcome your feedback. And if you want us to examine a particular issue, please let us know.

Sincerely,  
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis



NEARI Press  
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## Featured Website



### [Resources for Resolving Violence](#)

Joann Schladale is the founder and executive director of Resources for Resolving Violence. This organization was created to provide staff development and training for treatment providers faced with the difficult challenge of working with children and families where violence and/or sexual abuse have become endemic. The website provides a variety of helpful resources and articles for professionals working with this at-risk population.

The research consistently informs us that families are central to the life of an adolescent and can be an integral part of the teen's social support, safety network and healing journey. Schladale describes the research that supports the importance of family involvement with juvenile treatment. For example, she notes that antisocial behaviors and an unstable home life are predictors of recidivism (Prentky, et al., 2000). Schladale reminds us that adolescents will be members of their family long after their treatment is over. She clearly outlines obstacles to working with families and informs us that even professional jargon can prevent a meaningful alliance. Throughout the article, Schladale outlines a collaborative approach that respects the rights of all family members as well as the rights of the entire family.

### **Implications for Professionals**

*Understanding and assessing families is a specialized area.* Just as assessing and treating sexual abuse requires both general and specialized knowledge, working with families is its own area of practice. Professionals with training in sexual abuse should also seek specific training for work in family assessment and therapy. Clinicians should be informed about the success of family centered treatment models (e.g., Multisystemic therapy), but not limit their practice to just one approach. Any approach that is used must explore the various pathways to success for adolescents and their families.

*Safety and responsibility are not the only considerations.* Ensuring safety of those harmed is vital, and treatment involving the adolescent accepting responsibility for his or her actions can be very helpful. However, professionals should not confuse these short-term activities with assisting individual family members and the entire family in long-term healing, well-being and where appropriate, family reconciliation.

### **Implications for the Field**

*Families are central to safety and healing.* Building upon the family's strength is more difficult than finding their faults. However, when working with sexually abusing youth families must be at least considered as a part of their safety planning and support network. And, if the goal of treatment is to prevent further harm and encourage a healthy life, the families of the adolescent may be the essential component towards health and well-being.

We recognize that working with families is not easy. This is a challenging population. If professionals skilled in working with sexual abuse won't engage them, who will?

### **Reference**

**About the Author:  
David S. Prescott, LICSW**

[David Prescott website](#)

A nationally recognized expert in the field of sexual abuse assessment, treatment, management, and prevention, Mr. Prescott has published numerous articles and authored, edited, and co-edited books on risk assessment, interviewing, and providing residential treatment to youth. He is the President of ATSA and is currently the Clinical Director at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake, Minnesota.

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- Schladale, J., ATSA Forum. [Rough terrain: navigating around barriers to family involvement with youth who have caused sexual harm](#), Vol. XVII, No. 3, Summer 2005.

To print a pdf of this article, click [newsletter](#).

**Next Month**

NEARI eNEWS will look at the accuracy of assessments of high risk for sexual recidivism of adolescents.

**Questions/Feedback**

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