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Treatment strategies for forensic psychologists working with juvenile fire setters and bomb makers' parents

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Juvenile fire setting and bomb making (JFSB) has a significant public safety and fiscal costs associated with it. Juvenile fire setting behavior goes far beyond a simple designation as “curiosity” for the youth involved in these incidents. Instead, the behavior is often a manifestation of more expanded forensically relevant psychological issues (e.g., risk assessment level and motivation). If appropriate interventions are utilized when the behaviors are identified in the early stages, then the juvenile fire setting behavior can be the primary focus of the evidenced based interventions (e.g., FATJAM). Over the past few decades an increasing amount of research has been collected in this area, and it has become apparent that one of the important factors in achieving success for these juveniles is a healthy involvement of a parent or legal guardian. Parental endorsement or denial of the fire setting behavior can impact the progress of a child's towards controlling unwanted JFSB behavior. At the same time, parents/legal guardians provide forensic mental health professionals with important information as to the role fire setting behavior may play in the broader clinical picture of the juvenile. Therefore, while the relationship between the juvenile and the mental health professional remains a priority, working with the parent or guardian is also concomitant intervention variable that must be pursued in an effort to achieve the desired clinical forensic outcomes with JFSBs. This presentation will identify and explore strategies for forensic psychologists may use when working with the parents or guardians of JFSBs. Current research will be examined, while also reviewing and identifying suggestions as to where improvements can be made.

Biography

Ronn Johnson is licensed and board certified clinical psychologist with extensive experience in academic and clinical settings. He is a Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology. He has served as a staff psychologist in community mental health clinics, hospitals, schools and university counseling centers. The University of Iowa, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Central Oklahoma, and San Diego State University are among the sites of his previous academic appointments. His forensic, scholarship, and teaching interests include ethical-legal issues, police psychology, women death penalty, and counter-terrorism.

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