

**Best Practices with Youth Adjudicated Delinquent for Sex Offenses:
Educating Legislators and Policy Makers**

Anita Weinberg, J.D., M.S.S.W.
Lisa Jacobs, J.D.

Workshop Overview: In Illinois – as in many states – law and policy on “sex offender” issues has too often been driven by myth and stereotype. As a result, the state has enacted a patchwork of laws which not only fail to protect victims, support offender rehabilitation or enhance public safety, but can actually undermine those critical objectives. This proposed workshop will present the strategies the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission and the Loyola University Chicago ChildLaw Policy Institute have utilized to begin to break down some of these myths and stereotypes and instead to provide state legislators and policy makers with current and objective information on youth who become involved in the justice system for sex offenses. The workshop will discuss the origins of a legislative mandate to the Commission, which serves as Illinois’ “State Advisory Group,” as required by the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and the partnership between the Commission and the ChildLaw Institute to produce a comprehensive and objective study which can drive policy development for years to come. The workshop will also discuss the findings from the study, and the initial responses and reactions to the study, to be released in April 2013, and the anticipated impact on state statute.

Workshop Description: Public Act 097-0163 (SB2151), enacted in Spring 2011, required the Commission to “study and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly to ensure the effective treatment and supervision of the specialized population of juvenile offenders who are adjudicated delinquent for a sex offense.” To fulfill this mandate, the Commission partnered with the ChildLaw Policy Institute to conduct the necessary research and analysis. The study goals were to provide current, objective, and research-based analysis and recommendations for a) improving outcomes of youth who sexually offend, b) enhancing victim well-being and safety; c) improving community safety; and d) ensuring the effective expenditure of scarce resources.

This workshop will discuss the study’s methodology and findings , including the following core components: 1) Legal research / system mapping: analysis of Illinois law, policy, and practice governing juvenile sex offenses, including cataloguing the complex statutes accrued over time; 2) Research review: past and current research on problem sexual behavior among children and youth as well as the supervision and treatment strategies demonstrated to protect public safety and produce positive outcomes for youth, victims and communities; 3) Data analysis: documenting the scope and prevalence of juvenile sexual offenses in Illinois communities; 4) File reviews: review of files of youth on probation and youth committed to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice for sex offenses; 5) Practitioner Input and Perspectives: structured interviews with justice system professionals and service providers who work with youth who sexually offend, victims of sexual abuse, and families of victims and offenders.

The workshop will also discuss lessons learned from carrying out the study and the next steps in implementing improved state policy and practice. Anita Weinberg and Lisa Jacobs will present the workshop. Professor Weinberg worked with the legislative sponsor to enact PA 097-0163, designed the study and led the study team, in her role as a Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the ChildLaw Policy Institute. Ms. Jacobs is a gubernatorial appointee to and serves as Vice Chair of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. Ms. Jacobs served as a Commission liaison to the study team and worked closely with Prof. Weinberg to help design and implement the analysis and to present the findings to the Commission for the development of policy recommendations.