



## Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2007

### 12 Child Murderer: Psychiatric & Legal Assessment

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The goals of this presentation are to describe children accused of murder and to describe psychiatric and social factors along with psychological underpinnings of this phenomenon; to define the concept of risk assessment in children charged with murder; and to discuss the use of PCL-YV in risk assessment of juveniles charged with murder.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by enhancing knowledge regarding children accused of murder and the role of psychopathy and other risk factors in context of risk assessment.

Forensic psychiatrists are often retained to evaluate children charged with murder. Risk assessment for future violence can be one of the objectives of these evaluations. Child and Forensic psychiatrists due to their expertise in child and forensic psychiatry can use their training and experience to provide psychiatric and risk assessments in these children. However, risk assessment in children is a relatively young field that requires additional research and professional direction.

The paper will address aspects of psychiatric and risk assessment of children charged with murder. Common psychiatric symptomatology and psychological underpinnings that explain the motives of these children will be discussed based on clinical vignettes. Due to confidentiality reasons, the discussion will focus on salient legal and psychiatric points, instead of details of each case. Furthermore, role of psychiatric pathology, substance abuse, prior sexual/physical abuse, relationship with parents/care providers, academic achievement, social skills, handling of anger/frustration, role models will be discussed along with other risk factors of future dangerousness. Aspects of forensic report writing and testimony in juvenile and criminal courts, in context of risk assessment in children will also be addressed.

Use of Juvenile psychopathic traits based on Psychopathic Checklist - Youth Version (PCL-YV) can provide additional information in these evaluations. However, concept of juvenile psychopathy has raised questions about its validity due to difficulty in diagnosing children and adolescents with personality disorders. Therefore concept of juvenile psychopathy will be defined and its predictive potential about response to rehabilitative attempts in children and future dangerousness will be specifically addressed.

**Child Murderer, Risk Assessment, Juvenile Psychopathy**