

Generic CTP Issues in Counseling About Sexual Behavior

Deborah A. Orr, Ph.D
The Center For Drug Free Living
Orlando, Florida
Florida Node



Community Culture

- **A community culture formed from fundamental religious views (heavily Baptist).**
- **This includes a biblical view of extra-marital sex and homosexual sex as sinful.**



Community Culture

- **This includes a prohibition against discussing sex outside of the family (schools, etc) and even within the family.**



Community Culture

- **Substance abuse counselors are representatives of the larger community culture.**
- **In general, they do not see discussion of sexual behavior as an appropriate part of substance abuse counseling.**



Community Culture

- **If pushed to include discussion of sexual feelings, health and behavior with a client, many counselors feel uncomfortable.**
- **This discomfort is communicated to the client. Worse than discomfort, judgment is often conveyed.**



Community Culture

- **Discussion of sexual risk behavior is often relegated to brief meetings with the HIV Counselor, often in a group.**
- **This is not conducive to meaningful disclosure and skill building.**



Traditional Treatment Rules

- **Cardinal rules in residential substance abuse treatment programs preclude engaging in sexual intercourse, or other body fluid exchange behaviors.**
- **Rule infraction may lead to immediate discharge from treatment.**



Traditional Treatment Rules

- **Therefore, condoms are not made available for client use.**
- **This results in furtive, unprotected sexual behavior, with no opportunity to examine and modify the behavior (the consequence of disclosure is too negative to the client).**



Policy

- **Fundamental religious tenets may be reinforced by a conservative political environment in many locales.**
- **Funding does not support sexual risk reduction activities, education, supplies, etc.**
- **Policy may actively proscribe risk reduction activities**



What can research do?

- Develop and implement interventions that target the substance abuse counseling staff and their supervisors.



What can research do?

- Goal: increase the comfort and frequency with which general (appropriate) exploration and attention to sexual issues is included in routine substance abuse counseling. Sexual risk reduction is a subset of this larger domain, not the exclusive focus of the intervention.

