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**REUNIFICATION
WHEN SIBLING
SEXUAL ABUSE HAS
OCCURRED**

Presented to:

National CAC/CYAC Training Program

October 4, 2018

PRESENTERS



Michael David, MSW, RSW & Melissa Maltar, MSW, RSW

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*"Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me
and I learn."*

*~Benjamin
Franklin*

Michael Davis

Clinical Therapist

Melissa Maltar

Manager, Clinical Services



OBJECTIVES

Reunification After Sibling Sexual Abuse



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- **Statistics regarding....**
- Discuss unique features and strategies for working with families
- Review the framework to work with families where sibling sexual abuse has occurred – redefining reunification
- Examine a protocol for working with families where sibling sexual abuse has occurred



CONTEXT

The Stats



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We are all familiar with these stats:

1 in 2 females and 1 in 3 males have experienced unwanted sexual acts at some time in their lives

4 in 5 of these incidents happened when they were children or youth

95% of children who were sexually abused know the person who offended against them

(Badgley, 1984)





CONTEXT

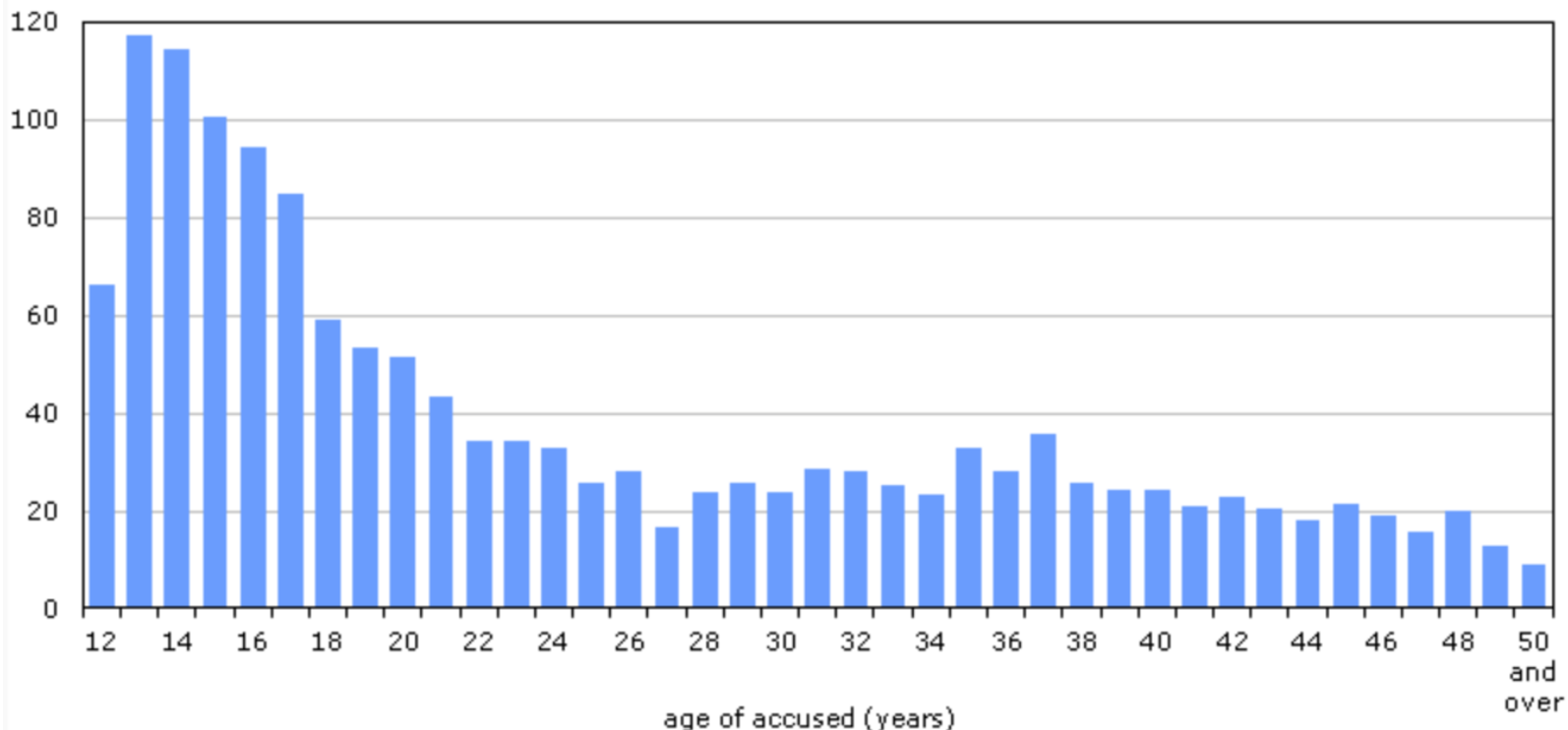
One-third of sexual offences against children or youth committed by another youth



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Persons accused of sexual offences against children and youth, by age of accused, Canada, 2012

rate per 100,000 population



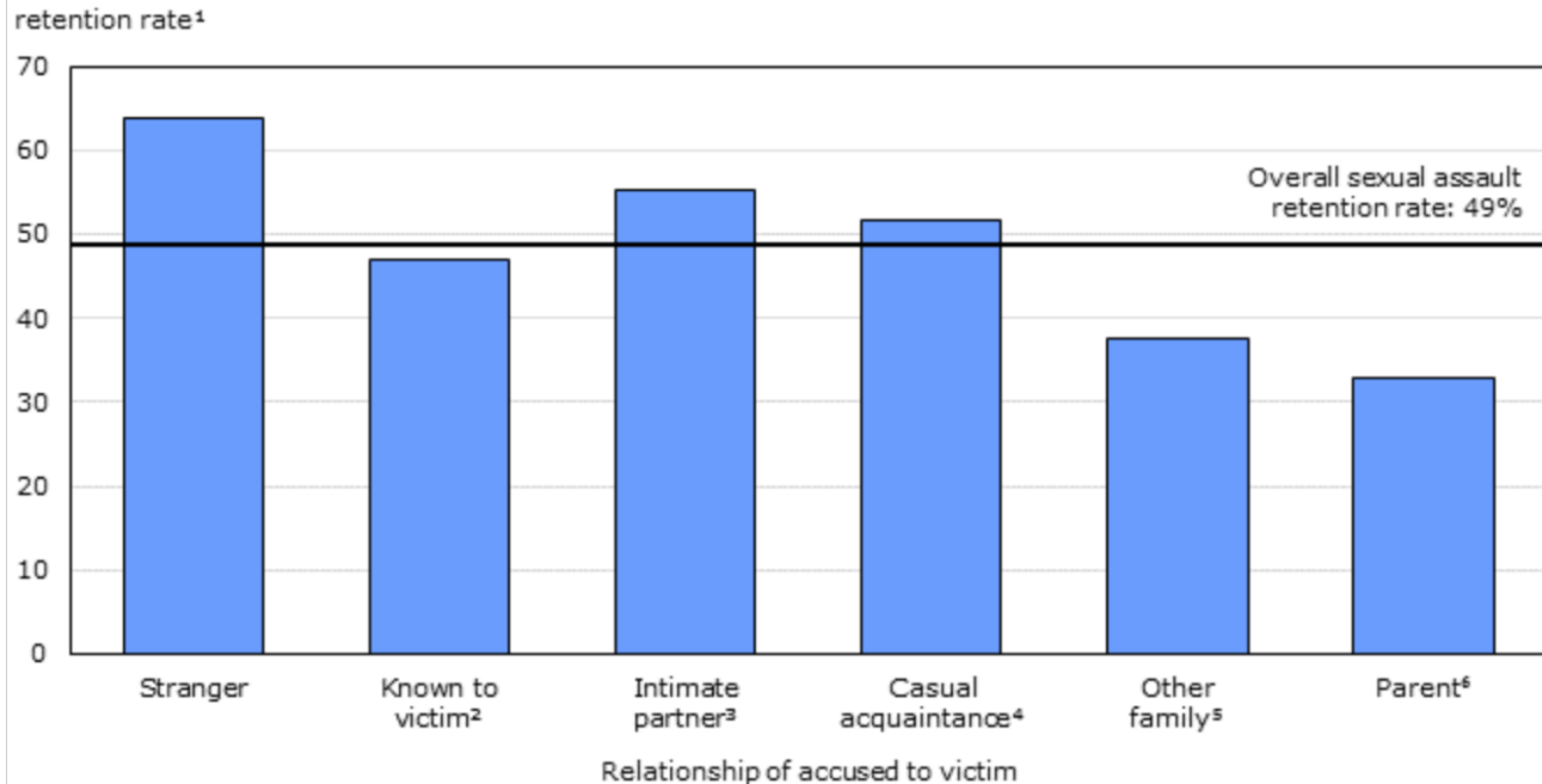
CONTEXT

Police reported sexual assault 2009 – 2014,
Statistics Canada



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Retention rates of sexual assault incidents charged by police that went to court by selected relationship types between the victim and their assailant, Canada, 2009 to 2014

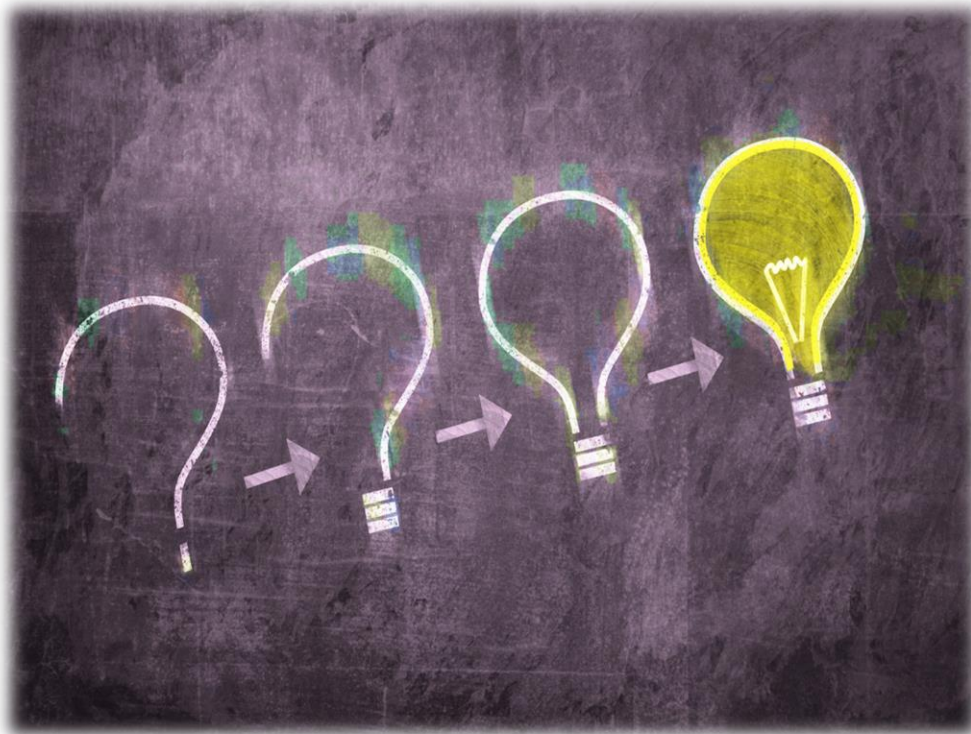




THE FIELD IS RELATIVELY YOUNG



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All that we
don't
know about
sexual behaviour
among
siblings



VALUE OF SIBLING

RELATIONSHIPS

Dunn, 1985



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“Most children grow up with siblings. The time they spend together in their early years is often greater than the time they spend with their parents. This relationship often lasts for a lifetime, longer than most marriages and parent-child relationships”.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF SIBLING

SEXUAL ABUSE

D. Berry, PhD, G. Crisc, MSW; H. Barbour, BSc. RSW, 1999
M. Chaffin, Centre on Child Abuse & Neglect, University
of Health Sciences Centre



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- Magnification of safety issues
- Confusing responsibility
- Parents
- Divided Loyalties
- Shared schemas
- Youth Justice
- Peer rather than authoritative relationship with the child who was victimized
- Less sexual complications

BELIEFS TO CONSIDER

About Reunification After Sibling Sexual Abuse has Occurred



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- Reunification is a process with no timeline
- Process is driven by child/youth who experienced sexual abuse
- Accountability and responsibility are necessary to move beyond safety
- Resolution is part of the process of making restoration, making amends, making peace
- Family relationships are changed through a resolution process

Sources: D. Berry PhD. G. Crisci, MSW; H. Barbour, BSc. RSW, 1999; DiGiorgio-Miller (1998); Gil (2006); Roizner-Hayes (1996)

ASSUMPTIONS TO HOLD

About Reunification After Sexual Abuse has Occurred, NSVRC 2016



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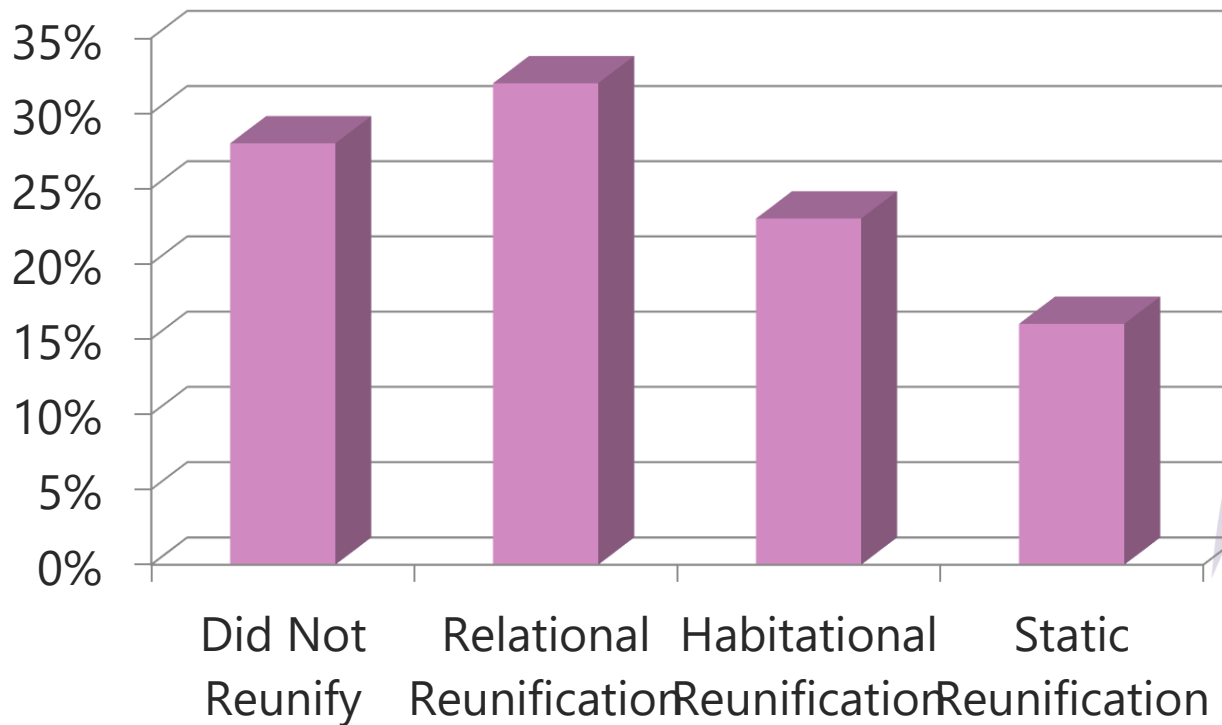
- **Every member of the community deserves to be safe** (NSVRC, 2016)
- **Acknowledge the harm caused to everyone** (Gilligan & Bumby, 2005; Schladale, 2014)
- **Increase the protective factors for the child and the family** (Appleyard & Osofsky, 2003; Harper, 2012)
- **A collaborative approach brings all perspectives to the table** (Gilligan & Bumby, 2005)
- **Interventions should be culturally, spiritually, linguistically informed and strengths-based** (Fontes and Plummer, 2010)

TYPES AND RATES OF REUNIFICATION

Barbour, Falls & Skau, 2008



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FACTORS THAT ENHANCE REUNIFICATION

Barbour, Falls and Skau 2008



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- Hope/Belief that reunification is possible
- Treated within the same agency
- All family members supportive and involved
- Supervisory system and unified approach
- Parental acknowledgement / hold youth accountable
- Clinicians familiar with unique issues of sibling sexual abuse

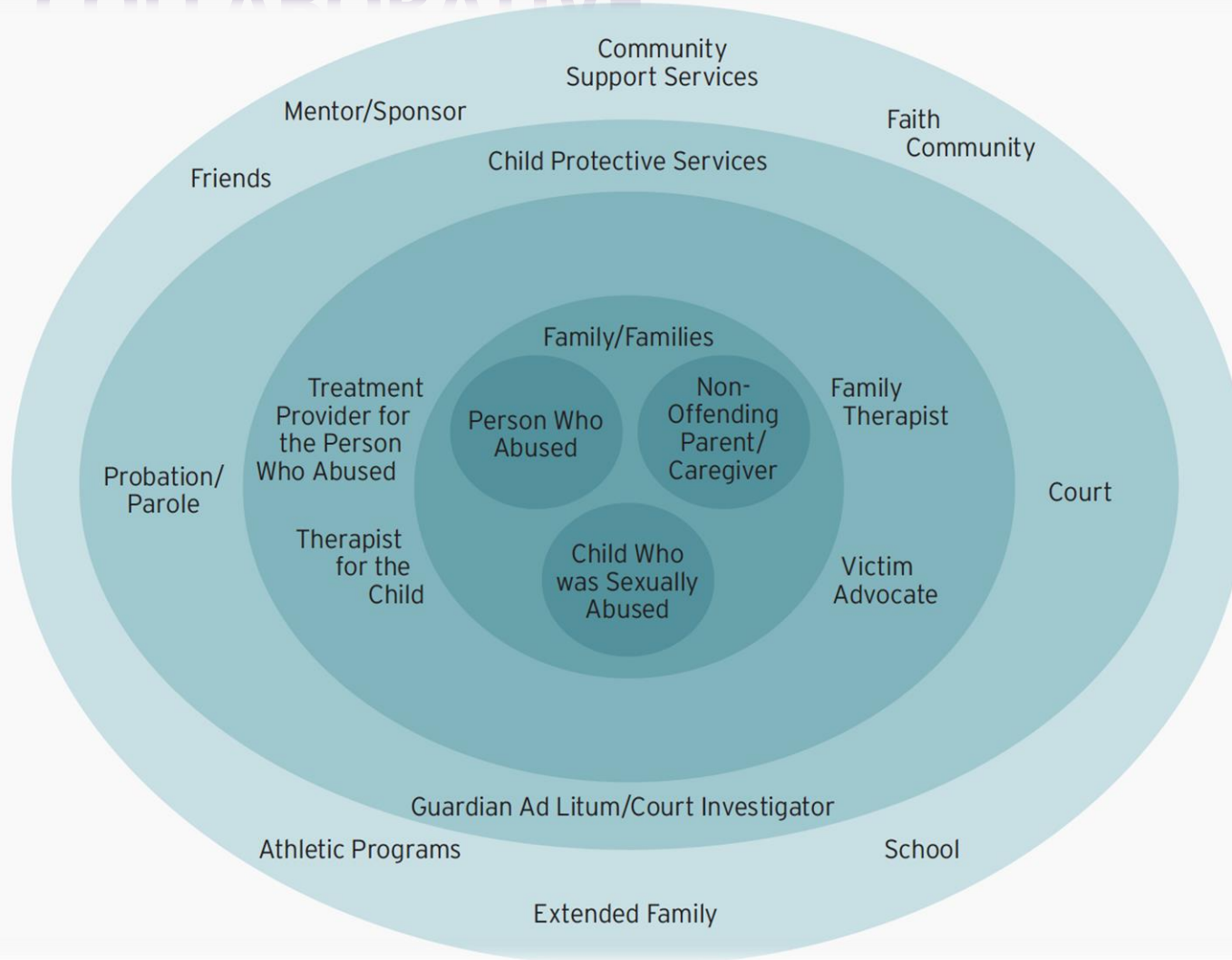
TREATMENT IS COMPLEX SO

WE HAVE TO BE

COLLABORATIVE



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DEFINITIONS OF REUNIFICATION

www.nsvrc.org



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Family Clarification



Family Reconnection



Family Reunification



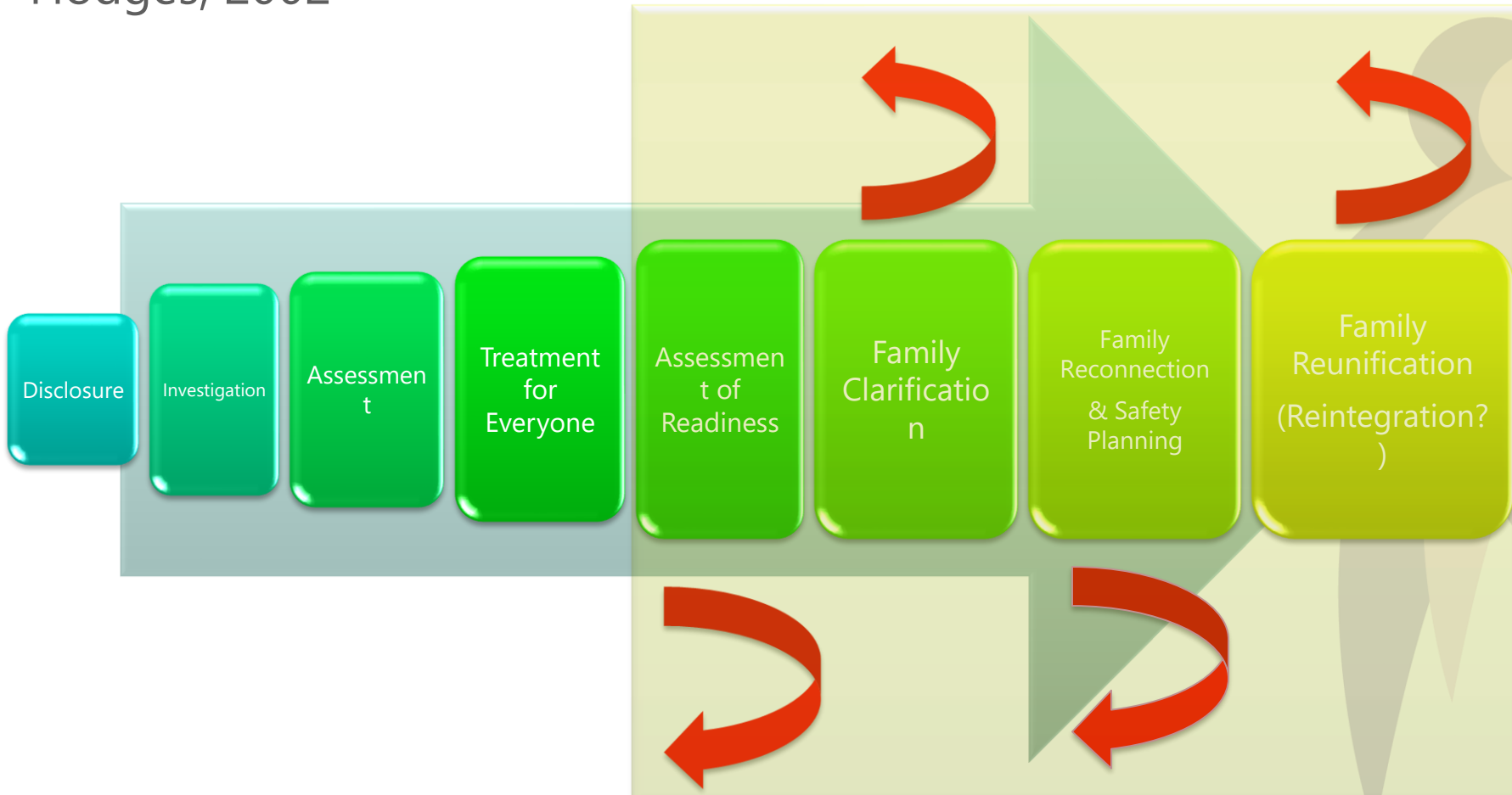
Family Reintegration
(?)

STEPS TOWARD REUNIFICATION

Tabachnick, J., & Pollard, P. 2016; Gilligan & Bumby, 2005; Price, 2004; B.Skau, H.Barbour, N.Falls, 2008; Hodges, 2002



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STEPS TOWARD RECONNECTION & REUNIFICATION



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Assessment of
Readiness



IDEAL PRECONDITIONS:

The Child who Experienced Sexual Abuse



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- Trauma-focused assessment
- Willing for reunification to begin
- Able to discuss the sexual abuse
- Holds person who sexually harmed responsible for consequences following disclosure
- Is able to discuss feelings and needs
- Does not blame self for sexual abuse
- Able to report any further abuse or high-risk situations
- Feels safe and protected in the home
- Knows and can carry out safety plans



IDEAL PRECONDITIONS:

The Adolescent who Engaged in Sexually Abusive Behaviour



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- Comprehensive assessment focused on sexually abusive behaviour
- Acknowledges abuse and accepts full responsibility
- Shows awareness of high-risk situations and their needs in this regard
- Can discuss and demonstrate strategies for coping differently with high-risk situations and address their needs
- Developed realistic prevention plans/strategies and safety plans
- Empathy for the child who was victimized and understanding of impact of their sexually abusive behaviour
- Apologized to the child who was victimized and the family for the abusive behaviour
- Independent wish to reunify with family
- Accepts reunification plans & limits



IDEAL PRECONDITIONS:

Non-Offending Adult(s)

- Independent wish to reunify with family
- Holds adolescent accountable for abuse and does not blame the child who was victimized
- Can discuss the abuse openly
- Puts needs for protection of the child who was victimized first
- Able report any further abuse or high-risk situations
- Aware of adolescent's high risk factors/needs, sexual abuse prevention strategies, and safety plans
- Demonstrates ability to supervise adolescent and protect children



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IDEAL PRECONDITIONS:

The Family



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- Puts victimized child's needs for protection first
- Holds adolescent accountable for the abuse
- Can discuss the abuse openly
- Aware of the offending adolescent's high risk factors/needs, sexual abuse prevention strategies, and safety plans
- Able to report any further abuse or high-risk situations
- Able to demonstrate healthy communication and interaction
- Able to demonstrate healthy support systems (i.e. not isolate themselves)



IDEAL PRECONDITIONS:

Non-victimized/offending Sibling(s)



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- Aware of the abuse
- Had opportunity to share their feelings/thoughts about the situation
- Recognize that the adolescent is responsible
- Are willing for reunification to begin
- Feel safe and protected
- Know and can carry out safety plans



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STEPS TOWARD RECONNECTION & REUNIFICATION :

Family
Clarification



CLARIFICATION:

Communication for Reconnection & Reunification



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- Communication is different than contact
- Extent and timing of communication is victim driven
- Start with parameters of communication
- The discussion of the sexual offending behaviour is a graduated process which begins with letter writing and works towards an apology session



FAMILY CLARIFICATION

Letter Writing as a Form of Communication Between Siblings



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- Types of Letters
 - Early questions
 - Questions to Therapist
 - Middle treatment
 - Apology
 - Future focused
 - Declarations





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STEPS TOWARD RECONNECTION & REUNIFICATION

Family
Reconnection &
Safety Planning

FAMILY RECONNECTION & SAFETY PLANNING

Safety = Hope



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- Sexual abuse is the loss of personal power
- The creation of safety allows for the restoration of power
- When you are empowered, then you are in a position to define your future
- The recognition of the victims voice is the vehicle that allows for the redefinition/transformation of the future

SAFETY PLANNING

Safety Trumps Everything Else



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- Creation of safety rules is victim driven
- All family members must agree to abide by the rules
- Safety planning is a process beginning with rigid, well defined rules and moving toward more flexible, co-created rules
- Rules need to encompass home, community, and extended family visits
- Rules need to describe supervision requirements, touch, privacy, access to sexual materials, and sexual conversations in the home
- Amended, as needed





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STEPS TOWARD RECONNECTION & REUNIFICATION

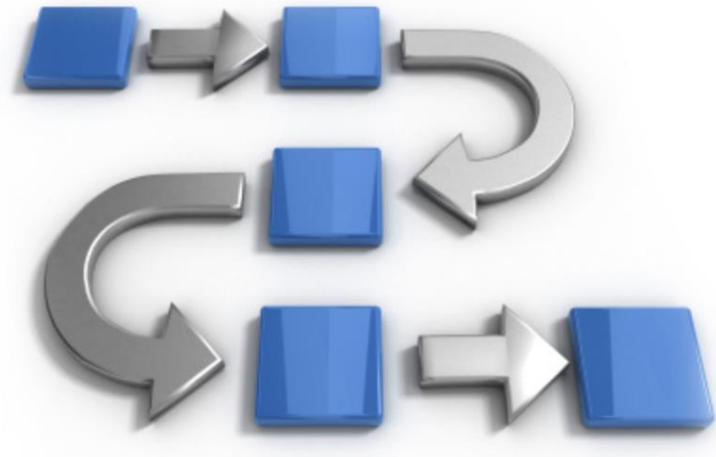
Family
Reunification
(Reintegration?)

REUNIFICATION IS NOT A SINGLE POINT IN TIME... IT IS A PROCESS OF RECONNECTING

- Letters & emails
- Video/audio recordings
- Telephone calls
- Live observation
- Out of home visits supervised by chaperone
- Out of home visits supervised by parents
- In-home visits supervised by chaperone
- In-home visits supervised by parents
- Overnight visits supervised by parent
- Trial return home
- Permanent return home*



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DEVELOPING A NEW FAMILY RELATIONSHIP MODEL: The "New Normal"



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- Restructure Family Relationships
 - Appropriate Boundaries
 - Conflict Resolution Methods
 - Positive Family Time
 - Open Communication
 - Active Listening
 - Respect
 - Gradual Small Steps For Success

Things may never go back to normal.

You may need to create a new normal.

And that's okay.

johilder.com

Bente Skau, Ph.D., Heather Barbour, B.Sc., RSW, Nancy Falls, Ed.D., RP



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? QUESTIONS





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THANK YOU

Radius Child and Youth Services,
1 Eva Road, Suite 216, Toronto, ON M9C 4Z5
P: 416-744-9000 | F: 416-744-7776 | Toll Free: +1 855-744-9001

60 Lakeshore Road West, Oakville, ON L6K 1E1
P: 905-825-3242 | F: 905-825-3276

www.radiuschild-youthservices.ca