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Interviewing for relational dynamics: Forensic understanding for sentencing offenders of intimate partner violence

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Abstract

Diversion programs are increasingly used in the United States legal systems where criminal, social, and human problems mesh. Intimate partner violence is one such criminal act where courts are increasingly using diversion programs primarily mandating offenders to anger-management treatment. Research in last five decades has consistently showed that the recidivism rate among offenders of intimate partner violence in civilian population has been between 25-60% post-participation in diversion programs. This presentation will (1) share excerpts from interviews with offenders' pre, during, and post their treatment program as well as from their therapy sessions to highlight the importance of relational, human dynamics between the offender and the victim to inform risk-assessment for re-offending; (2) emphasize on training the interviewers in listening skills by sharing excerpts from 'pre' interviews, and how such interviews may guide diversion sentencing; (3) demonstrate potential for positive outcome when the offenders thought of their victims at every step of the way and/or voluntarily involved them to support them in their rehabilitation; (4) recommend assessment of progress of offenders in diversion "treatment" program using stages of "Change Process" models (trans-theoretical and affective change process) for extending "treatment" of the offender. A discussion among participants will be strongly encouraged at the end of the presentation about how the relational perspective brought forth from social work profession may be blended with forensic insights contributed by fields like Medicine and Psychology to enhance criminal justice meted out to offenders of intimate partner violence.

Biography

Varsha Pandya has had a long career in the field of Family Violence and Juvenile Justice in India and in USA. She teaches courses on understanding human behavior in social environment, research, and electives related to Family Violence. She has published two single-authored and one co-authored articles based on her research with offenders of intimate partner violence.

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