

Introduction to Special Issue on Child Forensic Psychiatry

This special issue of the Bulletin on child forensic psychiatry is in recognition of the fact that child forensic psychiatry is now a significant presence in AAPL and is emerging as a subspecialty in its own right. In the past 10 years child psychiatrists have increasingly assumed active roles in programming, teaching, and leadership within the organization. Their continued commitment is admirable considering the perennial conflict that exists between AAPL meetings and those of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry each October. The relationship between the two subspecialties appears to be a healthy and growing one and it is apparent that AAPL has much to offer child psychiatrists who have not had formal exposure to forensic psychiatry.

This issue of the Bulletin is intended to offer a sampling of some of the current issues in child forensic psychiatry. The authors do not need introduction as most have been actively contributing to AAPL over the years. Dr. Benedek offers some guidelines on training in child forensic psychiatry. Drs. Billick

and Quinn discuss issues of competency and the child as a witness; both of these topics are becoming increasingly important as more and more young children are being called upon to testify in court, particularly in matters of alleged sexual abuse, without any clearcut guidelines for determining their competency as witnesses. In their article on relitigation in contested custody and visitation disputes, Drs. Ash and Guyer come up with some surprising findings refuting prior studies and dispelling some myths. Dr. Abright provides a current overview of child sexual abuse, with emphasis on legal and psychiatric aspects. This article, along with the article by Feldman, Lewis, and Mallouh on filicidal abuse in the histories of condemned murderers, should be of particular interest to the adult forensic psychiatrist. Dr. Morrison expands upon ethical issues in child forensic psychiatry. Finally, Drs. Goldzband and Schetky debate the matter of who should be doing child custody evaluations. Although Dr. Goldzband has the last word, we leave it up to the readers to decide.

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