

and a review of legal standards. The authors describe the process of conducting sanity evaluations, including gathering collateral information, interviewing defendants, and formulating opinions about criminal responsibility. They cite the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law's "Practice Guideline for Forensic Psychiatric Evaluation of Defendants Raising the Insanity Defense"¹ as a resource.

Part III examines civil adjudication, including civil commitment, guardianship, competence to consent to treatment and research, and competence to testify. The authors review workers' compensation, disability, and other evaluations related to antidiscrimination laws. Although each chapter stands on its own and provides a thorough overview, in some ways these latter chapters are less comprehensive than the criminal law chapters, but only in relative comparison.

"Legal Matters Involving Children and Families" are addressed in Part IV. Chapters include "Juvenile Delinquency," "Child Abuse and Neglect," "Child Custody in Divorce," and "Education and Habilitation."

The authors review report writing, expert testimony, and other topics in Part V, "Communicating with the Courts." These chapters contain useful advice regarding managing depositions and pretrial conferences. Sample questions from courtroom examinations of expert witnesses are presented and classic pitfalls are described. Chapter 19, entitled "Sample Reports," provides a wealth of examples that illustrate concepts presented elsewhere in the text. Chapter 20 contains a useful glossary of terms.

The final (almost 200) pages of the text contain in-depth discussions of information cited in the preceding chapters. Placing these notes at the end of a text this size makes for a cumbersome cross-referencing experience for the reader.

Throughout the text, the authors have described evidence-based data and focused on larger systems issues in an effort to help inform readers. In the chapter that describes juvenile courts, for example, they contemplate whether the juvenile court system should be abandoned if its structure and function closely approximate adult court practices. They note that law reform and role changes for juvenile court mental health professionals should be considered if the juvenile court system is to function as an agent of youth rehabilitation.

Overall, the authors are to be commended, yet again, for a comprehensive, useful analysis of an array of topics relevant to forensic mental health practice. The latest edition expands on the strengths of the previous two. It is an extraordinary, scholarly work that reflects current practice and is certainly worth its price, in particular for forensic mental health professionals who own previous versions.

Reference

1. Giorgi-Guarnieri D, Janofsky J, Keram E, *et al*: AAPL Practice Guideline for Forensic Psychiatric Evaluation of Defendants Raising the Insanity Defense. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law* 30(2 Supp): S1-40, 2002

Investigating Allegations of Child and Adolescent Sexual Abuse: An Overview for Professionals

By Tom Plach. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher, 2008. 180 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Emilie A. Becker, MD

Tom Plach, LCSW, is a veteran investigator of child abuse allegations. He wrote *Investigating Allegations of Child and Adolescent Sexual Abuse: An Overview for Professionals* for practitioners who are new to the field.

This 10-chapter book begins with the description of a successful multidisciplinary team assessment of a sexual abuse allegation. The team, explains Plach, uses an unbiased and objective protocol called multiple hypothesis investigation, which he describes as "the process of developing different theories regarding the facts of the case, and then gathering evidence to evaluate and/or rule out each theory." He also suggests various protocols that investigators may use to evaluate the merits of each complaint.

The chapter entitled "The Investigative Process" describes factors critical to any comprehensive child abuse investigation, including interviewing alleged victims and perpetrators, arranging medical evaluations, and documentation. Plach describes how to critique interviews, plan follow-up interviews, gather related evidence, and develop safety plans for victims. His chapter, "Support Services," offers suggestions of medical and mental health interventions for victims.

“Profiling the Victim” and “Gathering Evidence” are addressed in separate chapters.

Plach presents his views about handling difficult situations that arise during investigations. The chapter entitled “Special Situations” includes remarks about victims who recant their allegations and offenses involving multiple victims. Victim and expert testimony are also addressed in this chapter. He ends his book with a discussion about how one becomes a “competent child abuse professional.”

The main strength of Plach’s book is the vignettes that are born from real experience. The author’s advice to the uninitiated is presented with clarity and sensitivity. He seems to know from firsthand experience how allegations can change with retelling by those involved with the investigation, and he emphasizes the need for accurate documentation. He provides helpful background information about youth development and maturation, including emotional, social, cognitive, and sexual changes that occur. The book serves as a primer for those handling their first cases.

Several weaknesses in Plach’s book dilute the strengths. The first is the lack of an index. The reader cannot determine, for example, whether or where the timely yet controversial topics of repressed and recovered memories and the use of anatomically correct dolls are addressed in this book. Also, he does not review in any meaningful way the roles of child abuse evaluation professionals as fact and expert witnesses or appraise the dangers associated with a professional’s serving in dual roles with the same victim. In addition, he counsels professionals to maintain a warm and empathic relationship with the primary caretaker, but does not describe how to proceed when that caretaker is also the abuser.

The book includes two handouts (one in Spanish and one in English) for families of youth who have been abused. They contain accurate checklists of symptoms of adjustment disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder. However, the author does not specify that the handouts should be given only after the abuse has been factually determined. Otherwise, the list of symptoms may obligate caretakers and others to read symptoms into what might otherwise be normal behavior and may taint the testimony.

Plach emphasizes that every effort should be made to avoid retraumatizing the victim during the investigation. He does not remind the reader that even a sensitive, competent interviewer may unintention-

ally retraumatize a victim during the interview by asking about details of the offense. Yet, the process of revelation, which may result in legal restraint of the abuser, may be the most effective way to halt ongoing trauma for the victim.

Plach opines that it is “extremely rare for someone to deliberately coach a child into reporting a false allegation.” This remark counters the evidence of increased false allegations amid rancorous divorce proceedings.

A future edition of this book might include more case examples that help novices to manage their emotions when assessing and treating traumatized youths and their caretakers. Plach counsels that workers in the field should be unbiased, but he offers no guidance for managing feelings and enhancing objectivity. Ways for professionals to surmount barriers to mental health care for victims of abuse should also be addressed.

In sum, the book fares best when Plach sticks to what he knows: the challenge of assessing child abuse allegations and how to do so with sensitivity toward the alleged victim. This book should not be the only source of information for aspiring child and adolescent abuse professionals.

The Insanity Offense: How America’s Failure to Treat the Seriously Mentally Ill Endangers Its Citizens

By E. Fuller Torrey. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008. 265 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Cathleen Cerny, MD

Psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey, President of the Treatment Advocacy Center, has authored more than 200 articles and 20 books. His latest book, *The Insanity Offense: How America’s Failure to Treat the Seriously Mentally Ill Endangers Its Citizens*, explores how upholding the civil liberties of people with mental illness often comes at great cost to individuals and society. Torrey expands on psychiatrist Darold Treffert’s idea of “dying with one’s rights on” and outlines “the consequences of unconstrained civil liberties,” including victimization of the mentally ill,