

Credentialing or Qualifying of Clinicians Conducting Treatment and Assessment of Sexual Offenders and Sexually Abusive Youth.

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NJATSA promotes professionalism and integrity within its membership and within the greater field of sex offender specific treatment, treatment of sexually abusive youth, and related assessment. It is not clear that credentialing serves the purpose of maximizing professionalism as much as is intended. It has also been observed that some credentialing processes are established for purposes of making a profit for the credentialing organization and/or to reduce competition for income. Ethical and professional standards for what might be called the 'allied mental health fields' already specify that clinicians ensure that they are adequately trained, experienced and supervised in doing any work in which they engage. It is for these reasons that credentialing is not endorsed or recommended here. However, often in response to situations in which it became clear that such standards were not being applied, some states, departments, and other organizations have established specialty credentialing for clinicians conducting treatment and assessment of sexual offenders and sexually abusive youth.

To that end, NJATSA believes that treatment professionals working in this field should have, and that any official credentialing processes should include, the following, which can also be found in the ATSA Practice Standards and Guidelines as well as the Professional Code of Ethics, <http://www.atsa.com/atsa-practice-standards-and-guidelines-evaluation-treatment-and-management-adult-male-sexual-abusers>

- 2000 supervised hours of research, treatment, assessment of sex offenders and/or sexually abusive youth by a licensed supervisor in the field.¹
- a minimum of a master's degree in the behavioral sciences.
- a professional license for psychology, social work, psychiatry, and/or counseling.
- membership and reasonable participation in relevant professional organizations such as ATSA and NJATSA.²
- a minimum of ten hours each year of ongoing continuing education in the field of SO/sexually abusive youth.³
- ongoing work in the field.⁴

Notes:

1. Clearly, the number of hours of supervised experience is somewhat arbitrary. Nevertheless, the value of such experience is clear. Many doctoral programs require a one year internship and one full-time year of experience is often found to be the minimum amount of supervised experience that is sufficient to develop minimally sufficient skills in complex areas. Details of who must supervise and how much supervision must be given will need to be established but it is suggested that there be an initial 'grandfathering' followed by a requirement that the supervisor of record be credentialed.
2. Membership in ATSA and NJ-ATSA does not imply that the individual has the necessary qualifications. However, membership and involvement in professional organizations is, of itself, supportive of competence, current knowledge, ethical practice, and related.
3. Whether monitored or not, continuing education is critical in maintaining reasonable professional skills and knowledge.
4. Actively working in the field is probably the most important factor in maintaining relevant skills and knowledge. Details of what to do with credentialing should an individual stop working in the field for a certain amount of time will have to be established. It is recommended that an individual be able to document that their work includes at least a small amount of treatment and/or assessment of sexual offenders and/or sexually abusive youth. Failing that, it is recommended that credentialing be put 'on hold' after approximately one year and that some amount of supervised experience be required for the credential to be re-activated.