

Applying Collaborative Justice to Sexually Violent Predator Civil Commitment

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Track: Clinical, Legal

Level: Intermediate

Room: TBD

CE: CPA/BBS/BRN/MCLE (1.5)

Narrative

Sexually violent predator (SVP) statutes are unique in that these laws allow for the indefinite civil psychiatric commitment of sex offenders after their criminal sentences have been served. In addition to the high cost of psychiatric hospitalization, recently observed low base rates of sexual recidivism of sex offenders released from custody suggest that, in select SVP cases, a collaborative justice model of outpatient placement may be feasible in lieu of lengthy and costly placement in state hospitals. Given its position as one of the states with a large number of SVP commitments, California offers an opportunity to implement a collaborative justice model for adult sex offenders found to meet SVP criteria. In this presentation we provide a template for SVP collaborative justice, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and information from preliminary discussions with district attorneys and public defenders regarding application. Admittedly, this model faces multiple obstacles, both within the judicial system and in the public arena. Nonetheless, public concerns may be mitigated through high-control parole plus additional treatment and controls, interim halfway house placement, and community prosocial support systems.

BIO

Shoba Sreenivasan, PhD

Shoba Sreenivasan is a forensic psychologist with extensive experience in conducting SVP evaluations having done so since the inception of the law in California in 1996 (as a contract provider and independent expert for many years, and as a state employee since January of 2019). Shoba received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from UCLA in 1986 and completed a forensic post-doctoral fellowship at USC in 1987. She has testified in SVP in California and the State of Washington. Her current position is as an SVP Evaluator for the California Department of State Hospitals, Forensic Services Division. Shoba also had the privilege of serving our nations veterans for over 28 years when she was employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Greater Los Angeles VAMC. She has held an academic position through the Keck USC School of Medicine and faculty member of the USC Institute of Psychiatry, Law and Behavioral Sciences since 1987 where she teaches and trains forensic post-doctoral psychiatry fellows. In addition, Shoba has numerous peer-reviewed publications concentrating on SVP topics, military veterans, and ethical issues.

Amy Hoffman, JD

Amy Hoffman is the supervising attorney for the SVP unit for the San Diego Public Defender's Office. She was licensed in 2007 and was hired by the San Diego Public Defender's Office where she spent her first 8 months helping create the newly formed SVP unit. After 8 months on the unit, she transitioned to the Central Misdemeanor unit where she spent almost 4 years racking

juries for misdemeanor cases. After her time on the misdemeanor unit, she transferred and practiced in the San Diego Public Defender's Juvenile branch for 2 years. Following her juvenile practice, Amy went to a downtown felony team where she represented adult clients facing serious violent felonies. In 2015,

Amy went back to the SVP unit and began to really cut her teeth on initial petition trials. After attending multiple trainings surrounding the efficacy of sex offender treatment, Amy began litigating conditional release trials irrespective of whether a person had completed the Sex Offender Treatment Program at Coalinga State Hospital. This past year, Amy spearheaded bringing Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) to San Diego County to assist with the reintegration of SVPs in the community while on conditional release. Bringing CoSA to San Diego has been a highlight of her career and she is hopeful that one day, all clients leaving Coalinga State Hospital will have the support of a CoSA as it is truly the human connection between people that reduces recidivism and makes the community a safer place for all.

Allen Azizian, PhD

Allen Azizian holds the dual positions as Senior Psychologist Data Analytics Treatment and Assessment Unit Clinical Operations Division, California Department of State Hospitals and is Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, Forensic Behavioral Sciences, California State University, Fresno, California. He has extensive teaching experience at the college level in courses specific to forensic psychology, as well as extensive research and clinical experience in the treatment and assessment of those hospitalized either pre or post California SVP civil commitment. Allen was previously Chief of Psychology, California Department of State Hospitals, Coalinga State Hospital (2008-2010), and previously an assessment psychologist (2008-2009). He has extensive research experience and publications in the arena of criminology, SVP issues, most recently with publications related to sexual recidivism rates among those released from SVP hospital placement.

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate between adversarial and collaborative justice models.
2. Describe efficacy of mental health courts in reducing recidivism.
3. Identify process for current SVP civil commitment and proposed model for collaborative justice.
4. Identify three inclusion and three exclusion criteria for assessing SVP collaborative justice participants.