

## **Interpersonal and Structural Trauma of People in the Criminal Legal System**

Sarah Vinson, MD

Closing Presenter

CE: CPA/BBS/BRN (2.0)

### Narrative

Marginalized populations not only failed, but often also harmed, by the housing, child-welfare, educational and employment systems are at higher risk for mental illness; however, far too often, the mental health system, be it private or public, is not readily accessible, culturally responsive, or a reliable source of effective interventions for them. When untreated mental illness results in behaviors that do not conform to societal expectations, people from these populations are disproportionately funneled into the criminal justice system. Unlike the school system that suspends or expels them, the housing system that evicts them, the employment system that never hires or readily fires them, and the mental health system that denies or delays their treatment, the gates of the criminal justice system are always open. As such, it is a system where the marginalized and those disproportionately impacted by myriad structural and interpersonal traumas are grossly over-represented. It follows that an understanding of the biopsychosocial impacts of interpersonal and structural trauma are essential knowledge for anyone working in or collaborating with the criminal legal system.

### BIO

#### **Sarah Vinson, MD**

Sarah Vinson is a triple board-certified physician who specializes in adult, child & adolescent, and forensic psychiatry. In addition to maintaining an active clinic practice where she sees a socioeconomically diverse clientele, she is the founder of [Lorio Forensics](#), a multidisciplinary culturally and structurally informed forensic mental health consultation company. She has consulted on cases in over a dozen states and testified and been admitted as an expert in state, federal, criminal and family courts. Sarah graduated Summa Cum Laude from Florida A & M University. After graduating from medical school at the University of Florida with Research Honors and as an Inductee in the Chapman Humanism Honors Society, she completed her general psychiatry training at Cambridge Health Alliance/Harvard Medical School. While there, she also received specialized training in trauma through the Victims of Violence Program. She then returned to the South to complete fellowships in both child & adolescent and forensic psychiatry at Emory University School of Medicine, where she continues to serve as adjunct faculty.

Sarah is an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at Morehouse School of Medicine, where she was the lead architect and is the Program Director for the Child Psychiatry Fellowship, the first and only at an HBCU medical school. She has been elected and/or appointed to national and statewide office by her professional peers and is on the board of both the American Association of Community Psychiatry and the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law. She is also one of two National Psychiatric Advisors for the [Judges and Psychiatrists Leadership Initiative](#), a collaboration between the Council of State Governments and the American Psychiatric Association that designs and delivers trainings for Judges regarding mental health and criminal justice. Additionally, at the invitation of the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), she serves on the National

Judicial Task Force to Examine State Courts' Response to Mental Illness. She is the co-editor of two texts, *Social (In)Justice and Mental Health* and *Pediatric Mental Health for Primary Care Providers*.

Learning Objectives

1. Apply the concept of structural trauma to populations with whom attendees regularly work.
2. Identify reasons for the over-representation of traumatized populations in the criminal legal system.
3. Describe the mental healthcare systems limitations in caring for those impacted by myriad structural traumas.