THE SEXUAL PREDATOR
LEGAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, ASSESSMENT, AND TREATMENT CONCERNS

Volume V
Edited by Anita Schlank, Ph.D.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the authors for their hard work on the chapters they submitted. Special thanks go to Dr. Olivia Garland and Dr. Steven Wolf, who had the shortest notice of anyone to complete their chapter. Thanks also to our wonderful copy editor, Lori Jacobs, and to the equally wonderful Deborah Launer, the Executive Vice President of Civic Research Institute (and her editorial assistant, Eun Jeong). I would like to offer my appreciation to all of the staff at VCBR. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to Jim Stewart (Commissioner), Olivia Garland (Deputy Commissioner), Steven Wolf (Director-OSVP), Kim Runion (Facility Director), and Dr. Ramesh Chaudry (Chief of Staff) who understand the importance of quality treatment and supported me in implementing the integrated model and the family outreach component described in this book.

I would also like to thank Judy for her continued support, and extra thanks go to my brother and sister-in-law, who took on so many extra responsibilities toward the end of my father’s life. I know you don’t particularly want The Sexual Predator volume on your bookshelf, but I’ll at least photocopy this page for you to show appreciation. (If this book just had a better title, I would have included an “in memoriam” note for Dad.)

Some final notes: Thanks to my good friend Patricia for her emotional support. Oh, and Ben G.—it is a loss to the field of forensic psychology that we couldn’t recruit you, but I wish you much luck in your career. As always, to all the treatment providers in this field—you get my undying respect for doing such a stressful and often thankless job.
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Steven C. Wolf, Ph.D.
Steven C. Wolf began working with sexually aggressive individuals as a pre-trial diversion counselor in Washington State in 1975. In 1977 he cofounded Northwest Treatment Associates in Seattle. Northwest was featured in Anna Salter’s book Treating Child Sex Offenders and Victims and in a Frontline documentary, Men Who Molest. He has authored a number of articles and chapters on sex offenders and consulted or presented in the United States, Canada, Europe, and New Zealand. Dr. Wolf came to Virginia in 1999 to assist the Department of Mental Health on designing a secure treatment program for persons civilly committed as SVPs. In 2003 he designed the initial treatment program model and served as its first clinical director. In 2006, Dr. Wolf opened the Office of Sexually Violent Predator Services. In that role, he guided the continued development of VCBR, worked with partners in the Department of Corrections and the Office of the Attorney General to design Virginia’s SVP conditional release program. He continues to play a role in shaping SVP legislation and in the ongoing evolution of Virginia’s SVP system.
Introduction

“More dangerous than hitmen” is how sexual offenders, particularly those who offend against children, have been described by those who simply cannot comprehend their actions (Nhan, Polzer, & Ferguson, 2012, pp. 829–830). Those authors went on to note that judges often hold views similar to the public’s when it comes to sexual offenders. For example, one judge from California explained that in developing laws, terms are carefully used, noting “we purposely use ‘predator’ because it connotes something bad versus ‘offender’” (Nhan et al., 2012, p. 828). Another judge illustrated judicial emotions by quoting a Texas saying: “Many a man that needed killin’, no child that needed a molestin’” (Nhan et al., 2012, p. 829). Sexual abuse is a confusing behavior that is difficult to understand and triggers many strong emotions, even in legal and mental health professionals.

This emotionality can sometimes be in the other direction as well—in defense of the sexual offenders, and can be exacerbated by strong feelings about civil commitment as sexually violent predators (SVPs). For example, one group of defense attorneys hosts a website that asks the question: “Who is the sexual predator—the accused or the lying teen?” and asks, “What is being done to prevent these teens from ruining the life of another man? Nothing . . . .” It adds that “citizens should be open-minded and not be afraid of being labeled as a sex offender supporter simply for standing up to laws that are unfair” (Pavlinoc, 2011). Additionally, on listservs, where debate about commitment evaluations can get quite heated, forensic psychologists who work solely for defense attorneys have been known to make snide swipes at state-hired psychologists, even implying that they are unethical for doing their very difficult and often thankless job.

In fact, however, it is understood that sexual offenses are, if anything, greatly underreported, so there is little cause to worry about “lying teens.” And, research shows that all evaluators need to be more conscientious about the effects of hiring bias, regardless of whether they are hired by defense or prosecutorial attorneys (Murrie, Boccaccini, Guarnera, & Rufino, in press).

Ideally, we should all work together to decrease the emotionality that influences important decisions regarding sexual offenders. As stated by Nancy Sabin, the executive director of the Jacob Wetterling Foundation, “We have to stop pretending that these people are coming from other planets” (Janus, 2006, p. 1). We also need to stop expressing hostility toward those who evaluate and/or treat SVPs. We should strive to offer our support to offenders who had been committed as SVPs but who are now genuinely trying to change their lives and are struggling against obstacles such as stigma and public misinformation. Additionally, we should offer our support to lawyers, judges, and Central Office administrators who struggle with a hybrid program that does not fit cleanly into either the mental health or the correctional world. Finally, we should offer our support to the dedicated mental health professionals who try to conduct the best possible assessments and offer the highest-quality treatment to this highly misunderstood subgroup of criminal offenders. This book series is one small step in an effort to accomplish that goal. The authors in this volume have all proven to be dedicated to maintaining the highest standards possible when it comes to public poli-
cy, assessment, and treatment of those residents civilly committed as SVPs. In addition, they remain dedicated to battling the myths and overemotionality triggered by this topic. I thank them for their hard work in this field and their willingness to share their knowledge with others.

—Anita Schlank

References


Table of Contents

About the Authors ................................................................. v
Introduction ........................................................................... xiii

PART 1: ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL ISSUES

Chapter 1: SVP Commitment of Individuals Found Incompetent to
Stand Trial
Amanda M. Faniff, Ph.D., Randy K. Otto, Ph.D., A.B.P.P. and
John Petrila, J.D., LL.M.
Introduction ........................................................................... 1-1
Competence to Proceed .......................................................... 1-3
Competence and Civil Commitment Proceedings .................. 1-4
  Traditional Civil Commitment .................................................. 1-4
  SVP Commitment .................................................................. 1-4
  Important Differences From Traditional Civil Commitment .... 1-4
  Competence to Challenge Unproven Allegations in SVP Hearings 1-7
  Competence to Participate in the SVP Commitment Process .... 1-8
Summary and Discussion ......................................................... 1-10
Challenges Associated With Incompetence in the SVP Context .. 1-13
  Competency to Challenge Unproven Allegations ................. 1-13
  Treatment of Unrestorably Incompetent SVPs ...................... 1-14
Conclusions/Future Directions ............................................... 1-14

Chapter 2: Update on Legal Issues Involving Sexually Violent Predators
Anita Schlank, Ph.D., A.B.P.P.
Introduction ........................................................................... 2-1
State Cases: California ............................................................. 2-2
  Hydrick v. Hunter ................................................................. 2-2
  People v. Gonzales ............................................................... 2-3
  Branniburg v. Monterey County et al. ................................. 2-3
Federal Cases ........................................................................ 2-3
  U.S. Court of Appeals .......................................................... 2-3
    Brown v. Watters ............................................................... 2-3
    McGee v. Bartow .............................................................. 2-4
### Chapter 3: Sexually Violent Predators—The View From Central Office Administration

**Olivia J. Garland, Ph.D. and Steven C. Wolf, Ph.D.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions vs. Logic</td>
<td>3-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>3-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Skilled Workforce</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Acts</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interagency Collaboration</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The In Door</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Commitment and Treatment</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Out Door: Transitional Processes and SVP</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Release</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision on Conditional Release</td>
<td>3-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Judge Success</td>
<td>3-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>3-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions/Future Directions</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 4: A Philosophy of SVP—One Approach to Identifying Sexually Violent Predators

**Daniel F. Montaldi, Ph.D.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Support for a New Approach</td>
<td>4-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Approach to SVP Determination</td>
<td>4-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

Findings From Oppaga Study ................................................. 4-5  
  Commitment/Community Release Recommendations .................... 4-5  
  What These Findings Suggest ........................................... 4-7  
Constitutional Values and Principles ..................................... 4-7  
  Commitment Eligibility .................................................. 4-7  
Civil Confinement ............................................................ 4-8  
  Justification of Commitment ............................................. 4-8  
  Commitment of a Small But Not Negligible Number ................... 4-10  
  Paraphilia and “Serious Difficulty” .................................... 4-10  
  Paraphilia and Sexual Compulsivity: Different Constructs .......... 4-11  
Another Approach to Selecting a Narrow Category ....................... 4-12  
  The Driven Offender ..................................................... 4-13  
  Danger vs. Risk ........................................................... 4-14  
  Risk Reductionism and the Irrelevance of Mental Disorder ........ 4-14  
The Traditional Approach .................................................... 4-15  
  Statistical Risk ............................................................ 4-15  
  The Problem of Reference Group ........................................ 4-16  
  Aggregate Category Risk and the Probability of Wholes ........... 4-17  
  Relative Category Risk and the Collective Distributive  
    Use of Actuarial Methods ............................................. 4-18  
  Relative and Aggregate Category Risk Concepts Not  
    Directly Relevant to SVP Determinations ......................... 4-19  
  The Superiority of Statistical Methods of Prediction .............. 4-20  
Civil Commitment and the Traditional Approach to Statistical  
  Risk ................................................................................ 4-20  
  The Frequency Model of Probability .................................... 4-21  
  Other Probability Models .................................................. 4-23  
    Individual Distribution of Probability Is Not Possible  
      With a Frequency Model ............................................. 4-23  
    Reconviction Rates Cannot Be Absolute Probabilities  
      Even at the Category Level ........................................ 4-24  
    Sex Offending Does Not Fit the Assumptions of a Frequency  
      Model ................................................................. 4-25  
  Actuarial Superiority to Judgment Does Not Support  
    Individual Distribution of Probability  
    A Frequency Model Is Less Problematic for Inferential  
      Statistics ......................................................... 4-28  
  Probability for Dangerousness Is Not Based on  
    Percentages of Offenders Reoffending ................................ 4-29
PART 2: ASSESSMENT ISSUES

Chapter 5: Diagnosing Paraphilias
Anita Schlank, Ph.D., A.B.P.P.

Introduction ............................................. 5-1
History of Psychosexual Diagnoses ......................... 5-2
Diagnosing Using the DSM-IV-TR ......................... 5-2
   General Criteria ..................................... 5-2
   Noncoercive Paraphilias:
      Fetishism ........................................... 5-3
      Transvestic Fetishism ............................... 5-3
      Sexual Masochism .................................. 5-4
   Coercive Paraphilias:
      Voyeurism ........................................... 5-4
      Exhibitionism ....................................... 5-4
      Frotteurism ......................................... 5-4
      Pedophilia .......................................... 5-4
      Sexual Sadism ...................................... 5-5
      Paraphilia, NOS ..................................... 5-6
Diagnosing Using DSM-5 .................................. 5-8
Conclusions/Future Directions .............................. 5-11

Chapter 6: Developments in the Use of Static-99 in Assessing Risk for Sexual Recidivism
Robin J. Wilson, Ph.D., A.B.P.P.

Introduction ............................................. 6-1
A Brief History of Sexual Offender Risk Assessment .... 6-4
Development of the Static-99 .............................. 6-5
   Scale Construction .................................... 6-5
   Psychometrics ........................................ 6-6
Revising the Static-99 .................................... 6-7
   Revising the Age Scoring ............................. 6-8
   Rates of Reoffending ................................ 6-9
   Variability Due to Sample Type ....................... 6-11
      Routine ............................................. 6-12
      Preselected for Treatment Need ................. 6-12
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 7: Keeping up With the Field in Field Validity Research—Updated Texas Norms for the Static-99 and Static-99R</th>
<th>7-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>7-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Field Validity” Research</td>
<td>7-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Local Norms”</td>
<td>7-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updating “Local Norms” and the Dynamic Nature of Field Validity Research</td>
<td>7-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests From the Field</td>
<td>7-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static-99 and Static-99R Sexual Recidivism Rates: All SVP Screened Offenders</td>
<td>7-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static-99 and Static-99R Sexual Recidivism Rates: Offenders Selected for SVP Evaluation</td>
<td>7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Practice</td>
<td>7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice in Texas</td>
<td>7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine Samples or Preselected High-Risk/Needs Norms?</td>
<td>7-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions/Future Directions</td>
<td>7-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 8: Denial and Recidivism Among High-Risk, Treated Sexual Offenders</th>
<th>8-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Post-Hanson and Morton-Bourgon</td>
<td>8-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Present Study</td>
<td>8-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>8-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Denial</td>
<td>8-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>8-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recidivism</td>
<td>8-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>8-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Denial</td>
<td>8-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial and Psychopathy</td>
<td>8-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial and Risk</td>
<td>8-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Denial, Risk, and Recidivism</td>
<td>8-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differing Relationships</td>
<td>8-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Denial</td>
<td>8-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9: Dynamic Risk Assessment of Sexually Violent Predators

Jennifer E. Schneider, Ph.D. and Paul Dudek, Ph.D.

Introduction .......................................................... 9-2
Static vs. Dynamic Risk Factors .................................. 9-2
Sex Offender Treatment Intervention and Progress Scale .............. 9-3
  Sex Offender Treatment Needs and Progress Scale ................. 9-3
  Sex Offender Treatment Intervention and Progress Scale ........ 9-4
Dynamic Supervision Project ........................................ 9-6
  The Static-99R ..................................................... 9-7
  The Stable-2007 ................................................... 9-8
  The Acute-2007 .................................................... 9-11
Structured Risk Assessment: Forensic Version ......................... 9-14
  SRA:FV Need Assessment ........................................ 9-14
  SRA:FV Domains .................................................. 9-14
    Sexual Interests Domain ....................................... 9-14
    Relational Style Domain ..................................... 9-15
    Self-Management Domain ..................................... 9-15
    Distorted Attitudes Domain ................................... 9-15
    Scoring ................................................................ 9-15
  Interrater Reliability in an SVP Population ......................... 9-15
The Violence Risk Scale: Sexual Offender Version ..................... 9-16
  The Stages of Change Model ..................................... 9-16
Strengths of Dynamic Risk Assessment .................................. 9-19
Similarities and Differences Between Different Dynamic Risk Classification Procedures .................. 9-19
Conclusions/Future Directions ....................................... 9-21

PART 3: TREATMENT ISSUES

Chapter 10: Motivational Interviewing in Civil Commitment Settings

David S. Prescott, L.I.C.S.W.

Introduction ......................................................... 10-1
Historical Considerations ........................................... 10-4
  Confrontational Aspects ........................................... 10-4
  Containment Model ................................................. 10-4
Motivational Enhancement and Civil Commitment .................... 10-5
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Motivational Interviewing .............................................. 10-7
   Getting Started ....................................................... 10-12
      Get Into the Mind-Set of Creating New Mind-Sets ............... 10-12
      Practice Reflections and Other Listening Skills .......... 10-13
      Seek Feedback When Expressing Empathy ................. 10-13
   Keeping the Spirit Alive ........................................... 10-13
      Abandoning the Guiding Style ................................ 10-14
      The Expert Trap ............................................... 10-14
      Losing Hope .................................................... 10-14
      Losing Curiosity ............................................... 10-15
Implementing MI in Civil Commitment .................................. 10-15
Conclusions/Future Directions .......................................... 10-16

Chapter 11: DBT—A Comprehensive Treatment for Sex Offender Populations
Alan von Kleiss, Psy.D.

Introduction .............................................................. 11-1
Background of DBT ....................................................... 11-2
Previous Application of DBT With Sex Offenders .................. 11-3
Basic Application of DBT to Sex Offenders ......................... 11-4
   DBT Treatment Hierarchy ........................................... 11-5
      The Dynamic of Affect Regulation and Relapse Prevention ........................................... 11-7
      DBT as Relapse Prevention ....................................... 11-7
Skill Modules as Adaptive Coping Responses and Good Lives
 Pathsways ................................................................. 11-9
      Core Mindfulness: Its Implications and Applications .......... 11-9
         The “What” Skills ................................................. 11-9
         The “How” Skills ............................................... 11-10
      Distress Tolerance Skills ....................................... 11-12
      Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills ............................... 11-14
      Emotion Regulation Skills ....................................... 11-16
The DBT Case Formulation .............................................. 11-19
   Biopsychosocial Underpinnings of Behavior ..................... 11-19
   Dialectical Dilemmas ............................................... 11-21
      The Consultation Group ......................................... 11-25
The Assumptions and Stance of the DBT Therapist .................. 11-25
Integrating DBT .......................................................... 11-26
Conclusions/Future Directions .......................................... 11-27
Chapter 12: Addressing Complex Trauma in Sexually Violent Predator Treatment Programs
Sujatha Ramesh, Ph.D. and Mark S. Carich, Ph.D.

Introduction ......................................................... 12-1
What Is Complex Trauma? ................................. 12-2
   Complex Trauma and Sex Offending .............. 12-4
   Complex Trauma and Dynamic Risk Factors ...... 12-5
Attachment and Complex Trauma ..................... 12-6
Mistrust and Complex Trauma ......................... 12-7
Self-Regulation Deficits and Complex Trauma .... 12-8
Sexual Acting Out and Complex Trauma ............ 12-8
Treatment of Complex Trauma ......................... 12-9
Treatment of Complex Trauma Among SVPs ........ 12-11
   Clinical Assessment of Complex Trauma ........ 12-12
      Trauma-Informed Individual Therapy as a Precursor to
         Group Therapy ........................................ 12-13
      Group Therapy as the Primary Mode of Treatment .... 12-14
   Integrated Treatment of Complex Trauma in SVP Programs .... 12-15
Conclusions/Future Directions ....................... 12-15

Chapter 13: Assessing and Managing Deviant Sexual Arousal
Ren A. Thorne, L.C.S.W., CSOTP

Introduction ......................................................... 13-1
Deviant Sexual Arousal ................................. 13-2
   Objective Measures of Sexual Arousal ......... 13-3
      Penile Plethysmograph ................................. 13-3
      Visual Reaction Time Assessment ............. 13-8
   Treatment Interventions for Disordered Arousal ................... 13-8
      Behavioral Techniques to Manage Deviant Arousal .... 13-8
      Newer Treatment Trends ................. 13-10
      Medication Intervention ....................... 13-10
   Evaluating Treatment Progress ............... 13-12
Conclusions/Future Directions ....................... 13-12

Chapter 14: Sexual Arousal in High-Risk Sexual Offenders—The Effects of Androgen Deprivation Therapy
Michael P. Bednarz, M.D. and Shan Jumper, Ph.D.

Introduction ......................................................... 14-1
CPA and MPA ...................................................... 14-2
Leuprolide Acetate ........................................... 14-2
TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Current Study ................................................................. 14-4
Method ................................................................. 14-4
Measures and Procedures ............................................. 14-5
Penile Plethysmography ........................................... 14-5
Lueprolide Acetate Protocol .................................. 14-5
Data Analyses ................................................................. 14-6
Results ................................................................. 14-6
Pretest Arousal ................................................................. 14-6
Pre- to Posttest Changes ............................................ 14-7
Discussion ................................................................. 14-9
Conclusions/Future Directions ........................................ 14-10
Brain Research ................................................................. 14-10
Effects on Recidivism ................................................... 14-11

Chapter 15: Educating Support Networks—Improving Community Reintegration
Anita Schlank, Ph.D., A.B.P.P.
Introduction ........................................................................ 15-1
VCBR’s Family/Friends Outreach Component ............... 15-2
Component Description ................................................... 15-2
Part One ........................................................................ 15-2
Part Two ........................................................................ 15-6
Part Three ....................................................................... 15-6
Challenges ...................................................................... 15-6
Conclusions/Future Directions ........................................ 15-7

Chapter 16: Circles of Support and Accountability—Dimensions of Practice, Research, and Collaboration in Sexual Offender Reentry
Robin J. Wilson, Ph.D., A.B.P.P. and Andrew J. McWhinnie, M.A.
Introduction ...................................................................... 16-2
Sentencing Practices ....................................................... 16-4
Effects of Incarceration .................................................. 16-4
Sexually Violent Persons/Predators and Civil Commitment ................................................... 16-5
Community Risk Management for Higher-Risk Offenders ................................................... 16-6
Supervision Alone vs. Supervision With Treatment ................................................... 16-6
Long Term Sexual Offender Probation and Lifetime Supervision ........................................ 16-7
High Risk/High Need ......................................................... 16-9
Citizen-Based Responses to Sexual Offender Reentry ................................................... 16-9

To order go to http://www.civicresearchinstitute.com/tsp.html and click Add to Cart
Circles of Support and Accountability ........................................ 16-10
  The Correctional Backdrop ............................................. 16-11
  The Community Backdrop .............................................. 16-12
  The Birth of COSA ..................................................... 16-13
  Growth of COSA ....................................................... 16-14
  COSA Theory of Change .............................................. 16-15
  What Happens Inside a COSA? ........................................ 16-17
  Information Sharing ................................................... 16-18
  Community Partnerships ............................................... 16-20

International Proliferation of the COSA Model ...................... 16-21
Research Findings ....................................................... 16-22
  Study One ............................................................. 16-22
  Study Two ............................................................. 16-22
  Study Data ............................................................. 16-23
COSA and Sexual Offender Civil Commitment ......................... 16-25
Conclusions/Future Directions .......................................... 16-26

Chapter 17: An Integrated Model of Sexual Offender Treatment
Anita Schlank, Ph.D., A.B.P.P.
Introduction ........................................................................ 17-1
Assessment ......................................................................... 17-2
Motivation ........................................................................... 17-4
Identification of Offense Pathways ................................... 17-5
Relapse Prevention ............................................................ 17-6
Good Lives .......................................................................... 17-6
Dialectical-Behavior Therapy ............................................ 17-7
Family/Friends Support Component .................................... 17-7
Conclusions/Future Directions .......................................... 17-8

Chapter 18: Texas Outpatient Civil Commitment of Sexually Violent Predators
Allison Taylor and Deborah Morgan
Introduction ........................................................................ 18-1
The Commitment Process ............................................... 18-3
Statistics and Recidivism/Reoffense Rates ......................... 18-8
Texas Court Case ............................................................. 18-9
Civil Commitment Appropriations and Expenditures ............ 18-10
Conclusions/Future Directions .......................................... 18-10
Chapter 19: The Pennsylvania Program

Tara Travia, Ph.D.

Introduction ................................................................. 19-1
Sexually Violent Predator Statute ...................................... 19-2
Act 21: Civil Commitment .............................................. 19-4
  Program Development ................................................. 19-4
  Challenges to the Law ................................................. 19-6
  Slow Growth of Program ............................................ 19-6
The SRTP Program ....................................................... 19-8
  Treatment Planning ................................................... 19-8
  Stage and Phase Model of Treatment Progression .............. 19-10
  Therapeutic Group Structure ...................................... 19-12
  Progression, Evaluation, and Contingency System ............. 19-13
  Testing ....................................................................... 19-14
  Release ....................................................................... 19-14
Conclusions/Future Directions ......................................... 19-15

Appendix 1: Bibliography ................................................. A-1

Table of Acronyms ......................................................... T-1

Table of Cases and Statutes ............................................ T-5

Index ........................................................................... I-1