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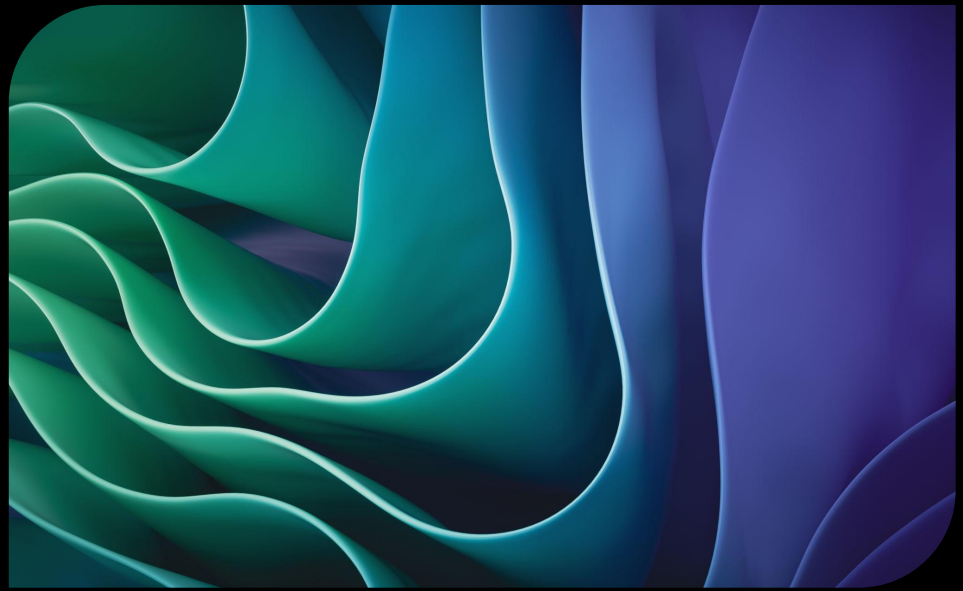
A Panel Discussion on Student Research:

The SAFR Lab Projects



Analysis of Neurobiological Factors and Intervention Strategies in Using the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model to Treat Adults Who Commit Sexual Violence: A Literature Review

Stephen Loggia, MS
David Feldman, PhD



Overview of Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR)

Bonta & Andrews (2007; 2017) describe 9 key Principles of the Psychology of Criminal Conduct

- 3 principles of interest:
  - Risk (Principle 5) – prediction of risk and matching of treatment levels
  - Needs (Principle 6) – specifically *criminogenic* needs (*dynamic risk factors)*
  - Responsivity (Principles 7 and 8) – delivery of treatment consistent with the abilities and functionality of the individual

Bonta & Andrews describe a "Central Eight" risk factor model:

criminal history
pro-criminal attitudes
pro-criminal associates
anti-social personality pattern
family/marital
school/work
substance abuse
leisure/recreation

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Neuropsychological factors and RNR for Sexual Violence

Executive functioning deficits have been shown to impact risk for offense for adults due to Central Eight overlap (Griffith, Nowalis, & Monroe-Gulick, 2024; Cheng, O'Connell, & Wormith, 2019).

- Adolescents seems to not differ significantly for adolescence-limited offending (Griffith, Nowalis, & Monroe-Gulick, 2024), but do for general risk-taking (Sherman, Steinberg, & Chein, 2017).
- Impulsivity shown to be more predictive of recidivism for violence than some traditional risk assessment tools, independent of substance use (LaDuke, 2016).

Neurobiological and neuropsychological deficits seem to be associated with risk of sexual violence, based on neuroimaging (Ramiao, Figueiredo, Azeredo, Moreiea, Barroso, Barbosa, 2023)

Psychopathy-related neuropsychological traits, especially impulse-control, may be a significant risk for those who meet criteria for pedophilic disorder (Shumate, Song, & Saleh, 2023)

Specific neurobiological deficits in people who meet criteria for Pedophilic Disorder are still being explored (Boschetti, Ciani, Scarpazza, 2023)

Moving Neuropsychological Findings into Practice and Risk Management

Findings by LaDuke, DeMatteo, Heilbrun et al (2017) suggest that justice-involved populations require different normative samples for neuropsychological testing (specifically for intellectual functioning, attention, executive functioning, and verbal fluency).

- TBI – 60.25% rate among justice-involved men, vs 8.5% across general population (Shiroma, Ferguson, Pickelsimer, 2010)

Several models now exist for introducing neuropsychological findings into addressing dynamic risk factors

- Walton, J. S., Ramsay, L., Cunningham, C. & Henfrey, S. (2017) suggest ways to introduce neurologically informed BPS model into both RNR and the Good Lives Model (GLM) of Offender Rehabilitation
- Newsome & Cullen (2017) reviewed neurological and biosocial factors as they related to RNR-based treatment, including Mindfulness Based Treatment (MBT) as a supplement to CBT

It's already looking good!

- Bootsman (2019) assessed the utility of neuropsych-based interventions for justice-involved adolescents, including mindfulness, psychophysiological feedback, and neuropsychological training
- Looked to physiological and neuropsychological predictors for future offending behaviors

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Barriers Affecting Deaf Survivors of Sexual Trauma

Hope Marceaux, MS & David Feldman, PhD
Nova Southeastern University

Introduction

- Although various professions are trained to work with individuals with disabilities, Deaf and hard of hearing culture is oftentimes overlooked.
- This may occur, in part, due to communication barriers, a lack of understanding, a fear of being misunderstood, and lastly, small samples sizes of Deaf survivors that do come forward.
- Deaf survivors experience sexual assault 1.6 times more frequently than the overall population.

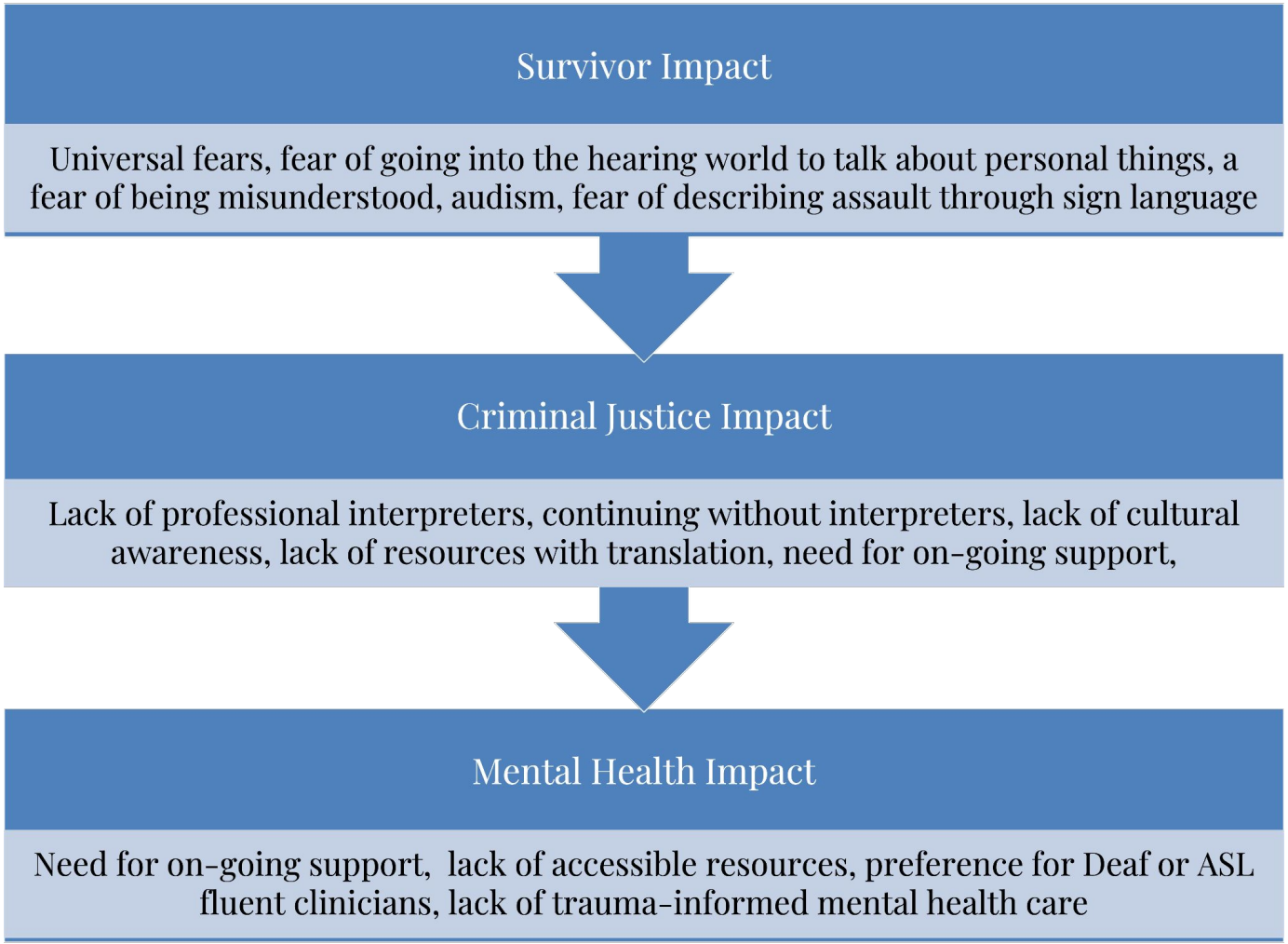
Method

- **Approach:** explore what barriers affect Deaf survivors' well-being
- **Search Criteria:**
  - *Terms*: “deaf victims and sex offenders,” “deaf victims of sexual assault,” “law enforcement working with deaf victims,” “service providers responses to deaf survivors,” “mental healthcare and deaf survivors of assault,” and “therapeutic barriers for deaf survivors of assault.”
  - *Databases*: PsycINFO, Sage Journals Online, and Google Scholar.
- **Inclusion Criteria:** mental health of deaf survivors, service provider competence
- **Exclusion Criteria:** literature focusing on disabilities as a whole, DV cases versus sexual assault

Extended-Intersectionality

Framework that analzyes people's lived experiences in relation to marginalization, power, inequality, and oppression basedo n the intersection of individual characteristics

Results


Survivor Impact
Universal fears, fear of going into the hearing world to talk about personal things, a fear of being misunderstood, audism, fear of describing assault through sign language
Criminal Justice Impact
Lack of professional interpreters, continuing without interpreters, lack of cultural awareness, lack of resources with translation, need for on-going support,
Mental Health Impact
Need for on-going support, lack of accessible resources, preference for Deaf or ASL fluent clinicians, lack of trauma-informed mental health care

Discussion

- Disability sensitivity training for service providers is recommended.
- Topics such as disability awareness, respectful communication, and ways to provide accommodations and support, regardless of whether the disability is visible or known, would be beneficial.
- Through more culturally competent approaches, service providers could recognize the unique challenges Deaf individuals experience and obtain more competent approaches in the future.

Limitations/Future Directions

- Limitation: significant deficiency in existing literature--impeding efforts for meaningful change
- Future Directions: an important question lingers as to whether our prevention and treatment systems are equipped to handle the challenges of culturally competent intervention for Deaf survivors.
    - Empirical study looking at barriers within the legal and mental health system.

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Bridging the Gap: Understanding the Impacts of Juvenile Registration Policies

Samantha Guajardo, MS
Nova Southeastern University

Introduction

- Juveniles adjudicated for sexual offenses have been subject to federal and state registry and public notification requirements (SORNA) since the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.
    - This is a departure from the original purpose of the juvenile justice system.
- Juvenile courts have traditionally acknowledged the vital role of confidentiality in a system aimed at rehabilitating youth.
- The application of legal sanctions for adults who have sexually offended does not account for the psychosocial and developmental contexts in which youth offend.
- The overall consequences for youth required to register have not been studied as extensively as those for adults.

FLORIDA

Age of adult criminal responsibility	18
Legislative waiver provisions	None.
Prosecutorial waiver provisions	Sexual battery and aggravated child abuse trigger eligibility at age 14; any felony triggers eligibility at age 16. *Fla. Stat. § 985.557.*
Judicial waiver provisions	The minimum age is 14, and any offense triggers eligibility. *Fla. Stat. § 985.556, Fla. Rules of Juv. Proc. 8.105.*
Sex offender registration provisions for juveniles adjudicated delinquent of serious sex offenses	There is mandatory registration for life. The minimum age is 14. Registrants are eligible for early removal after 25 years. *Fla. Stat. §§ 943.0435(1)(h)1.d, .0435(11)(a).*
Website posting provisions for juvenile registrants adjudicated delinquent of serious sex offenses	There is mandatory website posting. *Fla. Stat. §§ 943.043, 985.4815.*

Methodology

- **Approach**: A comprehensive research literature review was conducted to explore the overall consequences and impacts reported to occur to youth required to register.
- **Search Strategy**: All relevant literature was identified through searches of several academic databases, such as PsycInfo, ProQuest, Criminal Justice database, APA Psych Articles, and Google Scholar
- **Inclusion Criteria**: Literature was included if it presented critical analysis, theoretical discussions, and/or empirical evidence on registration outcomes across several domains of youth's adaptive functioning. There were no limitations regarding study design or publication date.

Findings

- Greater propensity of harassment and increase in violence victimization
- Increase in stigma and public shaming
- Youth may become targets of bullying and ridicule



- Negative mental health outcomes: depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, isolation, etc.
- Comparisons between registered and non-registered youth: greater reports of pathology

- Challenges maintaining stable housing due to zoning restrictions
- Limitations surrounding affordable housing options
- Youth may be required to live away from their immediate families

- Disruptions in meeting educational requirements
- Registration may hinder being near or in a school
- Limiting education opportunities

- No significant reduction of recidivism
- Possible increase in risk of recidivism for sexual and non-sexual offenses

- Nature of the victim can significantly impact other relationships
- Strain and separation from peer groups and family members
- Caregiver-adolescent relationship may be disrupted

Discussion

- Findings support the idea that youth being required to register under the same mandates as adults can foster an array of negative outcomes across social, psychological, health, education, and other lifestyle domains.
- The registration and notification requirements placed on youth are more punitive than rehabilitative, which contradicts the original intention of the juvenile justice system.
- Registration requirements and public disclosure can hinder youth's ability to process accountability, engage in meaningful change, and cope with the harm they have caused, while also obstructing effective treatment and successful reintegration into society.
- These youth should be treated in a manner that acknowledges their age, capacity for rehabilitation, and fundamental rights, as community safety and minimizing harm to these individuals are not conflicting objectives.

Future Directions

- Greater amount of research delineating the overall effects of the registry between registered and non-registered youth.
- Exploration of the protective factors within youth's lives that help alleviate negative outcomes that result from being required to register, such as the role of familial support.
- Development of more targeted and specific clinical interventions for clinicians working with youth who are learning to cope with and accept the effects of being on the registry.
- Advocacy for flexible policies that align with empirical research and effectively address the developmental needs, risk levels, and rehabilitation barriers faced by youth.

References



From Trauma to Transformation: Canines as Catalysts in Sex-Offending Treatment Programs

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Nova Southeastern University

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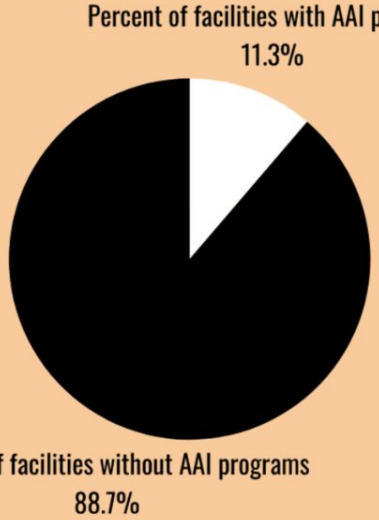
INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of the literature review was to examine research surrounding canine-assisted psychotherapy as an adjunct to conventional treatments for individuals convicted of sexual offenses
- Traditional interventions show some positive effects but yield inconsistent outcomes over long follow-up periods
- Historical barriers:
  - Negative public perceptions and societal stigma
  - Shared violence pathways
  - Animal welfare
  - Strict eligibility criteria
- CAP shows promise as an adjunct that may leverage the human-animal bond to potentially improve:
  - Emotional regulation
  - Reduce stress
  - Foster prosocial behavior

TOTAL NUMBER OF FLORIDA CORRECTIONAL FACILIITES



SCAN FOR LIST OF PROGRAMS



(The Administration of the United States Courts, 2024; Fine & Beck, 2019; Moneymaker & Stimple, 1991; Pzrybylski, 2015; Rawleigh & Purc-Stephenson, 2021; Szewczyk et al., 2023)

BACKGROUND

- Traditional treatment goals aim to target dynamic risk factors:
  - Encourage responsibility
  - Modify deviant cognitions and schemas
  - Develop prosocial coping mechanisms
  - Intimacy deficits and social isolation
  - Impulsivity and poor self-regulation

- Theoretical foundations of CAP:
  - Attachment Theory
  - Desistance Theory
  - Empowerment Theory
  - Social Support Theory
  - Control Mastery Theory

- Stress disproportionately impacts justice-involved individuals and increases recidivism rates if not managed effectively with coping mechanisms

(The Administration of the United States Courts, 2024; Bowlby, 1958; Eaton-Stull et al., 2021; Han et al., 2021)



METHODS

- Approach: explore the implementation of canine-assisted psychotherapy in the treatment of individuals convicted of sexual offenses.
- Search strategy: A comprehensive search strategy was utilized to identify pertinent scholarly articles for inclusion in this literature review. Databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and CABI Digital Library were queried using the following search terms:
  - Prison dog programs
  - Animal-assisted interventions
  - Individuals convicted of sex offenses
  - Therapy dogs in prison
  - Treatment for individuals convicted of sexual offenses
- Boolean operators were used to enhance the precision of search outcomes.
- Inclusion Criteria: This search included peer reviewed journals, books, chapters, and legal statutes. Literature only focused on canine-assisted therapy.
- Exclusion Criteria: Dissertations were not considered and literature focusing on canine-assisted therapy with non-forensic populations were excluded.



RESULTS

Physiological Effects

- Enhance neuroendocrine responses (e.g., increased oxytocin production, decreased cortisol)
- Stimulated endorphin and dopamine production
- Improvements in cardiopulmonary health

Psychological Effects

- Improve self-regulation, reduce anxiety, depression, and agitation
- Bolster self-esteem, promote empathy, and patience

Behavioral Effects

- Gained problem-solving and communication skills, leading to improved social interactions
- Improved self-control and reduced impulsivity
- Learn consent, boundaries, and respectful interpersonal relationships
- 41% reduction in violent infractions



(Buis, 2022; Eaton-Stull et al., 2020; Han et al., 2021)

DISCUSSION

Significance

- CAP enhances therapeutic engagement among individuals resistant to traditional talk therapy due to stigma or past traumatic experiences
- Facilitates the development of a prosocial identity and self-regulation
- Integrating CAP creates potential to address emotional dysregulation and improve long-term rehabilitation outcomes

Limitations

- Methodological variability
- Limited generalizability
- Lack of standardized treatment manuals for CAP
- Practical challenges

Implications

- CAP can be used as a viable adjunct to traditional treatment
- Increase public safety through reduced recidivism
- Increase treatment response for individuals struggling with trust

Future Directions

- Prioritize longitudinal studies
- Standardized protocols
- Integrating CAP with CBT and the RNR framework
- Expand to community-based treatment settings



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Vulnerable and Overlooked: Exploring Sex Trafficking in Indigenous North America

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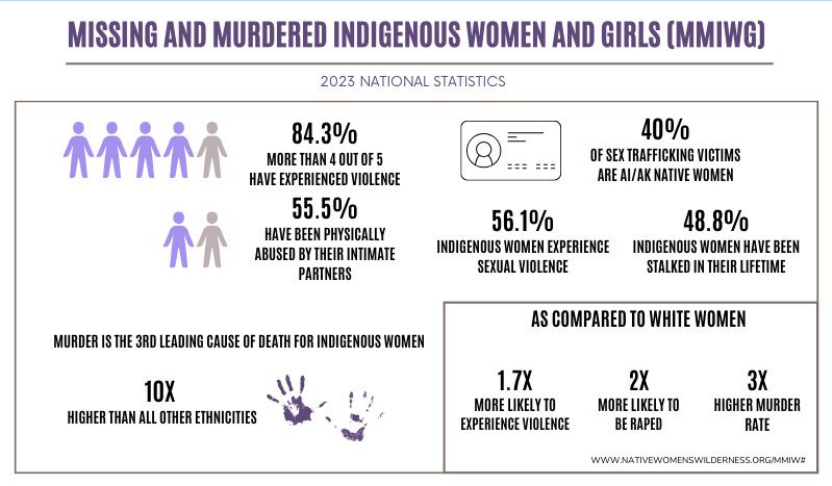
Introduction



- Traffickers include partners, family, and gang members using manipulation, false promises, and threats. Generational trauma, systemic discrimination, and lack of legal protections increases Indigenous vulnerability.
- Indigenous trafficking survivors face higher mental health risks due to compounding factors.
- Lack of culturally informed services and mistrust in legal systems leaves survivors without support.

Methods

Comprehensive Literature Review

- Reviewed and analyzed 32 sources.
- Sources from **Canada, United States, and Mexico** were included.
- Excluded sources focused on countries outside North America, labor or general human trafficking, or did not address Indigenous populations.

Limitations

- Sex trafficking is increasingly researched, but its impact on Indigenous communities is overlooked.
- Statistics on sex trafficking may be imprecise due to flawed identification measures and underreporting.
- Research only looked at North America.

Vulnerabilities

Legislative Trauma & Service Gaps

- Strict agency mandates limit scope and extent of services.
- Lack of communication between jurisdictions.
- Shelter requirements may be unattainable.
- Shortage of alternative housing.
- Systemic policies, like the Indian Act of 1876, which stripped Indigenous peoples of rights, took control of resources, banned cultural practices, and forced children into residential schools, left lasting impacts that continue today.
- Ongoing institutional violence sustains the intergenerational trauma leading to mental health disparities.

Generational Trauma & Colonization

Residential Schools (1830s-1960s)

- Indigenous children faced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by residential school staff and clergy, who often sexually exploited them.
- Survivors reported struggling with parenting and healthy sexuality – contributing to sexual exploitation within families.

"Sixties Scoop"

- Legacy of residential schools persists in the child welfare system today – separating children from families and culture and placing them in non-Indigenous homes.

Vulnerabilities

Socio-Cultural Trauma

Isolation and Belonging

- Misunderstanding trafficking and stigmatizing sex work hinder support and reintegration.
- Loss of cultural ties may lead individuals to seek "alternative families" in gangs.
- LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit individuals face family rejection and support service exclusion.

Mental Health

- Pre-existing mental health conditions, like PTSD, addiction, and depression, increase vulnerability to exploitation.
- Trauma disrupts stress responses, increasing the risk of substance use for self-medication.

Systemic Discrimination

- Racism against Indigenous communities blocks recognition and support for survivors and a lack of awareness enables ongoing exploitation.

Displacement & Economic Struggles

Land Dispossession

- Forced displacement of Indigenous peoples contributes to unsafe living and travel practices, like hitchhiking and being unhoused.

Poverty

- Familial-based sex trafficking can be poverty-driven and intergenerational, resulting from the residual impact of colonization and residential schools.
- Many forced to survival sex due to financial insecurity.

Considerations for Culturally-Informed Care

01

Community-Led Healing

Indigenous survivors prefer services led by or in collaboration with Indigenous peoples to ensure culturally competent care.

02

Cultural Connection & Elders

Elders play a crucial role in preserving traditions, fostering belonging, and supporting trauma recovery.

03

Building Trust & Safety

A strong therapeutic alliance is key, with acknowledgment of historical medical injustices to rebuild trust in care systems.

04

Comprehensive Support Services

Survivors need culturally-based, trauma-centered services, including street outreach, 24-hour safe spaces, transitional housing, harm reduction, and long-term case management.

05

Collaboration for Lasting Impact

Law enforcement, treatment providers, and community organizations must work together to ensure survivors receive both immediate care and long-term support.

Scan for References

Future Directions

- More research is needed to better understand sex trafficking among Indigenous communities in non-Canadian bordering states.
- The development of culturally informed screening tools, assessments, and interventions.
- Research on how mainstream anti-trafficking services can become more inclusive of these populations.