

## **Clarification and Reunification**

When a youth is removed from his/her home due to sexual misconduct, all contact and communication should only occur under clinical supervision and should adhere to a structured protocol. Re-establishing communication and contact should occur only as a therapeutic decision. Reunification decisions should be well thought out, clinically-guided and justified.

The following requirements are insisted upon and need to be followed during clarifying, resolving, reunifying youthful offenders with their victim(s), families and communities:

- The Clarification/Reunification process must be conducted and supervised by professionals skilled in working with sexual abuse treatment and dynamics.
- The sexually abusive youth, victim and all other participants must be assessed to determine if appropriate and if they can benefit from the process.
- The timeframe of when it should occur needs to be assessed. It is highly recommended that all individuals impacted or traumatized by the abuse should be involved in treatment during the clarification/reunification process.
- All participants should be carefully prepared.
- Any communication between sexually abusive youth and victim(s) needs to be clinically facilitated, approved and monitored.
- All goals and interventions need to be focused on the needs and best interest of the victim(s), families and community.
- Clear goals and objectives should be established prior to any/all communication between sexually abusive youth and victim(s).
- Rights, feelings and desires of the victim and those impacted by the abuse are paramount and take first priority throughout the process.
- Rules for behavior and communication should be established to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the participants.
- The victim may cancel the communication at any time and for any reason. Victim comfort and sense of control must be maintained during all sessions.
- Debriefing and follow-up with the therapists and the group members are integral elements of the process for all participants.
- It is acceptable and appropriate for the victim to change his/her position from one communication to the next and to change his/her mind about anything that transpired during any previous communication.
- Communication must be cancelled, postponed, terminated and/or re-evaluated if they appear to be causing any re-victimization or harm to the person victimized.
- The clinician should remain tuned into any subtle intimidation or pressure on the victim, whether intentional or unintentional, by the sexually-abusive youth or other family members, including parents.
- Enough time is provided in each communication to cover all material relevant to that session.
- Communication is scheduled frequently enough to ensure that the victim clarification process moves along smoothly.

(Lamb, D. et al., *The NOJOS Resolution Continuum With Traumatized Children, Families, And Communities Through Clarification, Resolution, Reintegration, And Reunification With Perpetrators Of Abuse*: a step-by-step guide to clinical reunification of abuse survivors, families, communities, and offenders impacted by abuse, 2003; Shladale, J., *A Collaborative Approach For Family Reconciliation And Reunification With Youth Who Have Caused Sexual Harm, Knowledge & Practice-Challenges in the Treatment and Supervision of Sexual Abuses*, Prescott, D.S., LICSW, Editor and Contributor, Wood ‘N’ Barnes Publishing, 2007, pages 239-279.)