

Program Instructors

Juvenile Forensic Evaluation: Principles and Practice

Fall 2023

Jeffrey Aaron, PhD

Jeffrey Aaron is a clinical and forensic psychologist. Currently in the role of Forensic Programs Consultant for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services, he previously spent almost 18 years at the Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents (CCCA), Virginia's only public psychiatric hospital for children and adolescents. At CCCA, Dr. Aaron practiced as a psychologist for 14 years and during that time was the Clinical Director of an adolescent unit, the Forensic Coordinator, and the Chair of the Ethics Committee. He then served as the hospital's Director. Dr. Aaron is Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry & Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia Medical School, Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia, and associate faculty at the Institute of Law, Psychiatry & Public Policy at the University of Virginia. Dr. Aaron has a private practice in which he conducts forensic psychological evaluations of adolescents and adults, and he has served as an expert witness in Juvenile and Circuit courts across Virginia. Areas of forensic specialization include evaluation of confessions, mitigation, posttraumatic stress, and juvenile justice. He has published in the areas of coping with stress, trauma, and forensic psychological evaluation, provided invited testimony before the Virginia House and Senate, and has presented across the Commonwealth on topics including forensic mental health evaluation, adolescent development and legal decision-making, coping with traumatic loss, and clinical assessment of children and adolescents. Dr. Aaron was a member of the Mental Health Workgroup of the Governor's Task Force on School and Campus Safety, currently serves on the Charlottesville/Albemarle gang intervention project known as Gang Reduction through Active Community Engagement (GRACE), and is a member of the Virginia Interagency Task Force charged with making recommendations to the Virginia General Assembly regarding the transformation of Virginia's juvenile justice system.

Scott Bender, PhD

Scott D. Bender is a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist (ABPP-CN) and is Associate Professor of Psychiatry & Neurobehavioral Science at the University of Virginia. After completing his clinical internship in clinical neuropsychology at Yale School of Medicine, he came to the University of Virginia in 2000, where he completed his postdoctoral fellowship in the department of Neurology. He was invited to join the UVA faculty in 2002 and has been with the Institute of Law, Psychiatry & Public Policy since 2005. His primary duties include conducting neuropsychological evaluations (clinical and forensic), teaching postdoctoral fellows, and publishing articles about malingering and brain injury. Dr. Bender provides instruction on forensic neuropsychological assessment in criminal and civil settings,

dissimulation, and assessment of civil competencies. His areas of research include the effects of traumatic brain injury (particularly mild TBI) on neurocognitive and emotional functioning, medically unexplained illnesses, and differential diagnosis of malingering. He is the author of multiple published manuscripts, articles, and chapters involving traumatic brain injury and malingering.

Dewey Cornell, PhD

Dewey Cornell is a forensic clinical psychologist and Bunker Professor of Education in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Dr. Cornell is Director of the UVA. [Virginia Youth Violence Project](#) and a faculty associate of the [Institute of Law, Psychiatry, and Public Policy](#). His research and teaching is concerned with the prevention of youth violence and bullying, as well as the facilitation of healthy student development and achievement through a supportive and structured school climate. Dr. Cornell has worked with juvenile and adult violent offenders, testified in criminal proceedings and legislative hearings, and consulted on violence prevention efforts. He has authored more than 200 publications in psychology and education, including studies of juvenile homicide, school safety, bullying, and threat assessment. Two of his books are *School Violence: Fears Versus Facts*, and *Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence*. He is currently conducting a federally-funded study of school climate and bullying in more than 700 Virginia secondary schools. Dr. Cornell's research interests include forensic clinical psychology; psychological assessment; juvenile violence and delinquency prevention; school safety, bullying, and student threat assessment.

W. Lawrence Fitch, Esq.

Larry Fitch is Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Maryland Law School, Reporter for the American Bar Association Criminal Justice/ Mental Health Standards Project, and special consultant on forensic services to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. From 1994-2013, Mr. Fitch was Director of Forensic Services for the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration. From 1982-1994, he was an Associate Professor of the General Faculty at the University of Virginia Law School and Director of the Forensic Evaluation Training and Research Center at the University's Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy. From 1978-1982, Mr. Fitch was a Research Attorney with the Institute on Mental Disability and the Law at the National Center for State Courts. Mr. Fitch has published numerous journal articles, book chapters, and monographs on a variety of psycho-legal issues and has chaired or served on committees of the American Psychiatric Association, the American Bar Association, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, the National Research Institute, and other national and state organizations. Currently he serves on the Editorial Board of the Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law.

Lucy Guarnera, PhD

Dr. Guarnera is a licensed clinical psychologist employed as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the Institute of Law, Psychiatry, and Public Policy (ILPPP) at the University

of Virginia, where she conducts psychological research and forensic evaluations on a variety of topics. These include immigration evaluations, evaluations of psychological injury, and other types of evaluations involving assessment of traumatic stress among juveniles and adults. Dr. Guarnera completed her predoctoral internship at the Charleston Consortium, where she specialized in the assessment and treatment of traumatic stress in children and adults (e.g., at the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center at the Medical University of South Carolina and the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center). She then completed a formal postdoctoral fellowship in forensic psychology at the ILPPP. As a researcher, Dr. Guarnera has co-authored peer-reviewed journal articles on traumatic events and responses among youth and adults, with a specialty in sexual violence and intimate partner violence. She is the co-author of a chapter on “PTSD and the law: Forensic considerations” in a leading academic text on PTSD (*Handbook of PTSD, Third Edition* [2021], The Guilford Press). She is also the juvenile training coordinator at the ILPPP, where she organizes trainings for forensic professionals on a variety of issues involving adolescent examinees.

Sharon Kelley, JD, PhD

Dr. Kelley is a licensed clinical psychologist and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the ILPPP. Her primary clinical and research interests involve forensic evaluation and defendants’ legal competencies. She has published and presented on a range of topics in these areas, including juveniles’ and adults’ Miranda comprehension, disputed confessions, and adjudicative competence. She is also part of a research team that investigates cognitive bias in forensic science disciplines as part of a larger research program to improve the scientific underpinnings of forensic science. Prior to working at ILPPP, she completed a clinical internship at University of Massachusetts Medical School and a postdoctoral fellowship in forensic psychology at the University of Virginia. She has worked in psychiatric hospitals, juvenile justice facilities, jails, outpatient clinics, and primary care centers.

Elizabeth Murtagh, JD

Elizabeth Murtagh is Deputy Public Defender, in the Charlottesville–Albemarle Public Defender Office, Charlottesville, VA, and Lecturer, UVA School of Law. Her academic work includes a BSW degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and a JD, degree from Washington and Lee University. Her professional contributions include Associate Editor, Virginia Capital Case Clearinghouse Digest; Member, Charlottesville-Albemarle Bar Association; Member, Indigent Defense Commission’s Juvenile Law Study Group; Member, House Joint Resolution 69 Juvenile Competency Workgroup, Virginia Commission on Youth; Member, Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center Advisory Board of the ABA National Juvenile Defender Center; Investigator, ABA study An Assessment of Access to Counsel and the Quality of Representation in Delinquency Proceedings in Virginia; Member, Virginia Indigent Defense Commission Standards of Practice Committee; Member, Indigent Defense Commission Appellate Default Committee. She is a member of the Board of Governors of the Criminal Law Section of the Virginia

State Bar and was named a Fellow of the Virginia Law Foundation Class of 2012. Attorney Murtagh is a frequent lecturer on representing children in court for continuing legal education programs.

Eileen Ryan, DO

Eileen Ryan is a Professor and Vice Chair of Clinical Services in Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at The Ohio State University College of Medicine and Wexner Medical Center. She is a psychiatrist and board certified in general/adult psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry, and forensic psychiatry. Her current clinical work is in the area of psychiatric emergencies among adults, adolescents, and children, and she has been recognized by Best Doctors in America. Prior to her position at OSU she was on the faculty at the University of Virginia and was the medical director of the Institute of Law, Psychiatry & Public Policy. She was also medical director of Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents in Staunton, Virginia. She also has been evaluating and treating adults and adolescents involved in the legal system for over 20 years, and has published in the areas of suicide, psychiatric evaluation and interviewing, trauma, competence to stand trial, sexual offending, the death penalty, and violence toward staff.

Ben Skowysz, LCSW

Benjamin Skowysz is the Juvenile Justice Program Supervisor for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. He is a licensed clinical social worker, a certified sex offender treatment provider and a juvenile forensic evaluator. He currently oversees the Juvenile Competency Services for the state of Virginia. Since the beginning of Virginia's Juvenile Competency Program in 2000, he has been a restoration counselor, supervisor, trainer, independent forensic evaluator, and served as an expert witness in Juvenile courts across Virginia. In 2013, he helped develop the Restoring Youth model of juvenile competency based on Virginia's model. He has successfully trained counselors and supervisors and implemented juvenile competency services for the County of Santa Clara in CA.

Janet Warren, DSW

Janet I. Warren is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences in the University of Virginia Medical School and teaching and research faculty at the Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy. She served as the University of Virginia liaison to the Behavioral Sciences Unit of the FBI from 2006 through 2019 and has conducted research for many years with the various FBI profiling units on serial rape, serial murder, and the abduction and murder of children. Professor Warren has received research grants from the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, the Virginia Department of Corrections and the Boy Scouts of America. She has published two books and 75 articles, many of which deal with the nature of forensic assessment with adults and juveniles and the use of different risk assessment instruments and threat assessment processes with a focus on gender differences. With funding from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Professor Warren in collaboration with the

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Disability Services created RestoringYouth (RY) a program guide with interactive applications and case management software to remediate youth aged 8 through 18 years ,<http://juvenilecompetency.virginia.edu/>. Professor Warren is a psychoanalyst trained by the New York Contemporary Freudian Society, a licensed clinical social worker and sex offender treatment offender in Virginia, and a national consulting expert through Park Dietz and Associates (PD&A) in Newport, California.

Heather Zelle, JD, PhD

Heather Zelle serves as the Associate Director of Mental Health Policy Research at UVa's Institute of Law, Psychiatry, and Public Policy. She is also an Assistant Professor of Research with the UVa School of Medicine Department of Public Health Sciences. She is a graduate of the law-psychology program at Drexel and Villanova Universities, where, among other training opportunities, she completed an externship at the Capital Habeas Unit of the Federal Community Defender Office. She completed her clinical psychology internship at the University of Massachusetts Medical School/Worcester State Hospital. Dr. Zelle has worked in psychiatric hospitals (on forensic, acute care, and continuing care units), correctional facilities, and outpatient clinics. In Virginia, she has served on several work groups studying mental health law, including expert panels informing the Virginia General Assembly and the Virginia Supreme Court's Behavioral Health Docket Advisory Committee. She is co-author of the revised version of Dr. Grisso's instruments for assessing Miranda comprehension. She has co-authored several publications, including chapters in the *Handbook of Psychology: Forensic Psychology*; *Forensic Assessment in Criminal and Civil Law: A Handbook for Lawyers*; *APA Handbook of Forensic Psychology*; and the forthcoming *Advances in Psychology and Law*; *The Litigators' Handbook of Forensic Medicine, Psychiatry, and Psychology*; and *Oxford Handbook of Public Health Ethics*.