

Learning Objectives

Juvenile Forensic Evaluation: Principles & Practice

Spring 2023

After completing the program requirements, trainees will be able to:

Introduction to juvenile forensic evaluation and competence to stand trial

1. Describe critical difference between therapeutic roles and forensic roles of mental health professionals.
2. Discuss legal foundations of forensic practice in systems of law, court systems, and criminal justice proceedings.
3. Name components of the forensic mental health system in Virginia.
4. Discuss professional ethical principles and considerations involved with forensic evaluations.
5. Discuss varieties of collateral documents that may support a forensic evaluation and handling of information from collateral documents in a report.
6. Identify some common writing problems when drafting and finishing a forensic evaluation report.

Evaluating adjudicative competence in juvenile court

1. Identify important legal and Constitutional standards regarding evaluation of competency to stand trial for the courts (e.g. Dusky v. U.S., Drope v. Missouri, and other standards).
2. Discuss the relevant abilities of individuals who are found competent to stand trial, and lack of relevant abilities of individuals who are found not competent to stand trial, under Virginia law.
3. Discuss foundational clinical and practical considerations for mental health professionals to prepare and to conduct evaluations of competence to stand trial.
4. Identify components of Virginia's program of restoration to competence to stand trial.

Empirical and clinical foundations of adjudicative competence

1. Discuss the concept of rational understanding as it relates to assessing juvenile adjudicative competence.
2. Describe some aspects of empirical and other research on juvenile adjudicative competence.
3. Describe elements observed from viewing one or two recorded forensic evaluations where issues of competence to stand trial were involved and discuss their observations.
4. Use a checklist to assist collecting information from interviews and from collateral documents with a case involving competence to stand trial.

Other forensic issues in juvenile court: Mental illness, malingering, transfer, & sanity

1. Discuss key information describing significant mental health problems among juvenile populations.
2. Discuss key information regarding malingering among juvenile populations.
3. Describe implications upon transfer of juveniles and forensic assessment of juvenile when considering adolescent development.
4. Outline stages in the development of the legal standard for insanity and describe the meaning of insanity under Virginia law (including the 'cognitive' and the 'volitional' prongs).
5. Discuss foundational clinical and practical considerations for mental health professionals to prepare and to conduct evaluations of sanity at the time of the offense.
6. Identify critical parameters under Virginia law for conducting and reporting and testifying regarding conclusions made by mental health professionals regarding insanity (including difference between evaluating for the defense and evaluating for the prosecution).

Expert testimony and working with attorneys

1. Outline legal standards involved with preparing for and offering testimony as a forensic expert (including qualifications, Frye standard, Daubert standard, rules of evidence).
2. Discuss aspects of best professional practices when preparing for and offering testimony in a forensic case (including the voir dire, presenting testimony, and handling cross-examination).
3. Identify best practices for working with attorneys representing juvenile clients.