

Abstract

**RESPONSES TO DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE HISTORIES OF
LONG TERM OUTPATIENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE PATIENTS: AN
EXPLORATION OF PATIENT AND COUNSELOR EXPERIENCES**

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The link between childhood sexual abuse and subsequent substance abuse has been well established in the literature. Paraprofessional counselors who are employed in a substance abuse programs are likely to encounter patients with a history of childhood sexual abuse, yet there is little research on paraprofessional substance abuse counselors' responses to their patients' disclosures of a history of childhood sexual abuse. This qualitative exploratory study examined how the counselors and patients in a long term outpatient substance abuse program respond to the patients' disclosures of childhood sexual abuse. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six methadone maintenance patients and five substance abuse counselors. It was found that the counselors provide a great deal of supportive therapy to their patients, and that despite conducting work in the first and second stages of Judith Herman's model for treatment of trauma issues, the counselors lack confidence in their ability to address trauma in counseling. Recommendations to provide clinical supervision and training to the counselors in order to empower them to provide this service were made.