

# Responding to Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse: Implications of Psychological Science for Legal Professionals

## WORKSHOP

### About the workshop

Why do children sometimes make false reports of sexual abuse? How common are false reports? Can mental health, medical, and social work professionals and paraprofessionals (MHPs) accurately discriminate between true and false reports? Are behavioural “indicators” of abuse—for example, sexualized behaviour in young children—useful in distinguishing between true and false allegations? What are the most common errors made by MHPs and law enforcement in CSA investigations and evaluations? How much weight should be given to MHPs’ opinions about the validity of uncorroborated allegations? What are appropriate roles for MHPs in the investigation and adjudication of cases of alleged CSA? What evidence should legal decision makers consider in order to judge the likelihood that a CSA allegation is true? In general, how should legal professionals and the courts respond to uncorroborated allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse? This advanced workshop for legal professionals will describe and explain scientific research findings that are relevant to answering these fundamental—but surprisingly difficult and controversial—questions. Interactive, experiential exercises will be used to demonstrate just how easy it is to make serious procedural and reasoning errors in these cases. The workshop will provide an overview of robust, but often counter-intuitive, psychological research findings that cast doubt on the fairness and safety of basing legal decisions on MHPs’ opinions about the validity of uncorroborated CSA allegations. Evidence-based suggestions for improving the accuracy, safety, and social utility of legal processes and decisions will be offered.

### About the Presenter



Dr. Steve Herman is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. He has a PhD in Counselling Psychology from Stanford University. His research focuses on forensic child sexual abuse evaluations conducted by mental health, medical, and social work professionals and paraprofessionals. Specifically, he has devised methods for estimating error rates for professionals’ judgments about the veracity of children’s reports of sexual abuse. His empirical and theoretical research has been published in professional journals and book chapters. He has created an online continuing education workshop on errors in child sexual abuse evaluations for the American Psychological Association. He has presented workshops for psychologists, judges, attorneys, law enforcement, child protection workers, forensic interviewers, and others involved in the investigation and adjudication of cases of suspected child sexual abuse in the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan and Brazil, including workshops at annual conventions of the American Psychological Association and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. His workshops receive high ratings from participants.

### Steve Herman Ph.D.

6.5 CPD hours

### Registration Fee

Early Bird: APS Member \$295

APS Student Member \$210

Non Member \$445

Standard: APS Member \$325

APS Student Member \$230

Non Member \$490

Early Bird registration closes 6 weeks prior to the workshop.

### Time

9am – 5pm (registration at 8.30am)

### Location and Dates

**Brisbane** | Monday, 20 October 2014

**Melbourne** | Friday, 24 October 2014

**Sydney** | Friday, 31 October 2014

**Adelaide** | Friday, 7 November 2014

**Perth** | Friday, 14 November 2014