

**WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE TREATMENT
OF SEXUAL ABUSERS
GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
9.20.2017
12:00-2:00 P.M.**

Attendees

Dan Knoepfler; Mary Laskowski; Michael Yu; Jay Williamson; Kecia Rongen; Elyse Balmert; Michael O'Connell; Holly Coryell; Alana Gorman-Knutson; Florence Wolfe; Paul Spizman; Lisa Trifiletti

Presentation

Word watch: Reflecting on how language impacts our response to assaultive acts

Presenters: Mary Laskowski & Dennis Ichikawa

“Language can never be neutral; it creates versions of reality. To describe an event is inevitably to characterize that event.” (Bavelas & Coates). The way that sexual assaults are documented-- by the legal system, law enforcement, the media, and service providers-- impacts the public discourse surrounding sexual violence. This interactive presentation will explore different categories of language used to characterize sexual assault: the language of consensual sex vs. language that conveys inherent violence; victim blaming language vs. offender-focused language, and minimizing language (passive voice and euphemisms) vs. accountable language.

The Court Watch Program (<http://www.kcsarc.org/courtwatch>) has been monitoring sexual assault cases in King County. They received a grant for their Word Watch program to monitor the use of language in court and court documents to record the use of “accountable” and “unaccountable” language. They have 40 volunteers who read documents and attend court proceedings. The Court Watch Program recently published a bench guide for judges presiding over sexual assault cases.

Ms. Laskowski discussed the importance of working with law enforcement on the language they use when writing police reports, paraphrasing victim statements, and in probable cause documents.

Three categories of unaccountable language were discussed, including victim blaming, minimizing, and implied consent language. Treatment providers were asked to reflect on their use of language in evaluations.

The PowerPoint presentation is available electronically. Please email Lisa Trifiletti at Trifiletti.lisa@gmail.com.

(WATSA members receive 2 hours of continuing education credits for attending today's presentation; please retain a copy of these minutes as a record/proof of your attendance/CEUs).