

## BOOK REVIEW

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## Reviews of: *Evaluation for Guardianship* and *Evaluation for Risk of Violence in Juveniles*

**REFERENCE:** Drogin EY, Barrett CL. *Evaluation for guardianship*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010, 159 pp.

**REFERENCE:** Hoge RD, Andrews DA. *Evaluation for risk of violence in juveniles*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010, 172 pp.

These two volumes appear among the 19 titles in the series *Best Practices in Forensic Mental Health Assessment*, edited by Thomas Grisso, Alan Goldstein, and Kirk Heilbrun. The series is supported by the American Academy of Forensic Psychology to promote forensic mental health assessments that are informed by science, legally relevant, and conversant in professional ethics.

Both books share a user-friendly format that is the hallmark of the entire series. They are compact and focused efforts to educate readers about the current standard of care in forensic behavioral science assessments. More experienced readers may find the format a bit elementary, with the liberal use of floating text balloons offering tips, warnings, and best-practices suggestions. These tend to give the books an introductory feel, perhaps best suited to use in training settings, and for practitioners looking to gain new expertise. On the other hand, these volumes can also serve as quick and dynamic reference resources for more experienced practitioners confronting cases involving the title topics.

Both books follow the standard format for the series, dividing the text into two broad areas. The first section of each book devotes three chapters to looking at foundational issues from legal, forensic mental health, and empirical research perspectives. These are concise and well-written summaries of the current state of the art in each substantive background area, which serve to bring the reader up to speed rapidly on each volume's central topic.

The second section of each book is devoted to the application of the foundational knowledge to actual cases. Chapters address preparation for the evaluation, data collection, data interpretation, and last, report writing and testimony. A nice annotated list of tests and specialized evaluation tools is provided as an appendix, along with landmark cases and statutes, and a glossary containing key terms of art.

In *Evaluation for Guardianship*, Eric Drogin and Curtis Barrett do a fine job of surveying the complex issues involved in evaluations of adults who are unable to manage their own personal or financial affairs and are in need of conservators or guardians. After reviewing the historical background of guardianship determinations, the book opens with a discussion of the legal procedures involved

and the methods employed to monitor guardians and ensure their accountability. Fundamental legal constructs, from testamentary capacity and undue influence to competency to vote, marry, or make medical decisions, are briefly discussed, followed by a more detailed legal analysis of the standards a guardianship evaluator should use in assessing for the disability at issue.

The clinical forensic assessment of each of these disability areas is then addressed with an eye toward relevant DSM-IV-TR diagnoses and diagnostic measures such as psychological and neuropsychological testing, and computer-based assessments. The mechanics of the assessment itself are reviewed with attention to details like counsel's involvement; scheduling, timing, and location of the examination; and use of collateral information. A broad outline of topics and functional areas to be assessed in the course of the examination is also provided, along with an annotated review of 20 guardianship-specific forensic assessment scales and tests. The volume concludes with advice on integrating the data obtained to produce effective and transparent reports and expert testimony that will serve to inform the trier-of-fact.

In *Evaluation for Risk of Violence in Juveniles*, Robert Hoge and D.A. Andrews synthesize the law and literature guiding the assessment and management of violent adolescents. After surveying divergent models of juvenile justice and base rates of juvenile violent crime, they turn their attention to research-based principles for best practice, including such issues as the use of standardized assessment procedure; risk and protective factors; and delivery of services in community as well as institutional settings.

Ethical and legal issues in the assessment process are then discussed, with a careful consideration of the research bases for the use of clinical versus actuarial prediction strategies to guide both the forensic assessment process and ultimate professional judgments. The examination process is unpacked, with attention to establishing rapport, guidelines for the interview process, and a thorough review of available standardized instruments developed for use in risk and needs assessments. The volume ends with concise tips for forensic report writing and expert testimony.

Taken together, these two books permit the reader a deeper analysis of their respective topics than what is generally available in broad-survey forensic behavioral science textbooks, and as such they provide the end-user with a tight and focused resource that ensures forensic evaluations, reports, and expert testimony that are informed by legal standards, empirical research, and best practices. The strength of these volumes lies in their focused synthesis of the relevant issues specific to the title topics. What they lack in heft, they more than make up for in their efficient presentation of relevant forensic practice guidelines.

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