



Duty to Warn: A Closer Look at the Tarasoff Case and Implications for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Counselors

By

Judith K. Adams, Ph.D., LMFT, LADC

Description of Presentation

This presentation reviews the Tarasoff legal case, which has become synonymous with professional duty to warn and protect an intended victim from harm. The court findings in this case have outlined professionals' duty to third parties, but as will be noted, the specific parameters of this duty are not clear. This workshop will highlight the events and participants, as well as the interplay of social and cultural variables in the Tarasoff case. The California Supreme Court decisions are reviewed. In the years following the Tarasoff decision, professionals' duty to protect was expanded, but in more recent years professionals' duty to protect has been limited. Some but not all states have codified the Tarasoff decisions into State Law, adding further confusion to the dimensions of professional duty. This workshop will conclude with guidelines for substance abuse and mental health professionals in Oklahoma, to better understand their duty to warn or protect, with the potential difficulties of predicting dangerousness and risks of damaging the therapeutic relationship.

Bio

Dr. Judith Adams was formerly Clinical Director at Valley Hope Alcoholism Treatment Center in Cushing, Oklahoma and Program Director of the Set Free Chemical Dependency Treatment Program at the City of Faith in Tulsa. She has been a part of the mental health and substance abuse treatment community since 1986. She has worked in out-patient mental health programs since the late 1980's. Dr. Adams has been in private practice since 1995, providing psychological counseling and assessment services to diversity of clients. Her clients range in age from less than two years to well into their 80's Oral Roberts University and has been an adjunct professor with the University of Oklahoma since 1983. In addition to being licensed as a psychologist, Dr. Adams is also a certified trauma counselor and a certified forensic examiner. She has been a presenter for ethics workshops over several years and has particular interest ethical issues.

