



Forensic Mental Health Assessments in Death Penalty Cases

David DeMatteo, Daniel C. Murrie, Natalie M. Anumba, Michael E. Keesler

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Forensic mental health assessments in death penalty cases are on the rise due in part to the continuing growth of forensic psychology and psychiatry as professions, combined with several recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Forensic mental health professionals are now conducting assessments at every stage of death penalty proceedings, ranging from pre-trial evaluations to determine eligibility for the death penalty to evaluations conducted post-sentencing and closer to the date of execution. Yet there are surprisingly few comprehensive resources available for students interested in death penalty assessments, clinicians who conduct those assessments, and attorneys who work with forensic mental health professionals.

Forensic Mental Health Assessments in Death Penalty Cases fills this gap in the literature, providing an essential road map to the field for students and practitioners. Well-written and comprehensive, this book integrates the most up-to-date research with best practice recommendations, yielding a solid foundation of information related to capital punishment, death penalty litigation, and the role of forensic mental health professionals in death penalty cases. Vivid descriptions of influential court cases, a discussion of ethical considerations, guidance on conducting various types of forensic mental health assessments, and sample forensic reports illustrating best practices make up this important work. Current case law is covered in detail, alongside an important discussion of what remains unknown and directions for future research. This book is essential reading for students and professionals in the fields of mental health, criminal justice, and law, as well as for forensic practitioners who may not be familiar with the special requirements of death penalty cases. It is also an important resource for attorneys who work with forensic mental health professionals.

"Dr. DeMatteo and his colleagues address a range of forensic mental health assessments, all related to death penalty litigation. They thoroughly consider up-to-date key legal cases, ethical issues, and methodology relevant to psychologists and psychiatrists working in this difficult area of practice. The inclusion of tables describing mitigating and aggravating factors and definitions of mental retardation on a state-by-state basis is an important feature of this book. This book is appropriate for graduate students, for 'seasoned' forensic mental health professionals, and for clinicians interested in developing expertise in evaluating a range of capital cases."--Alan M. Goldstein, Ph.D., ABPP, Board Certified in Forensic Psychology and Professor Emeritus, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

"In Forensic Mental Health Assessments in Death Penalty Cases, DeMatteo and colleagues have done a superb job of distilling the domains important for mental health evaluations in capital contexts. Having identified and described the issues surrounding Atkins, competence for execution, mitigation, and violence risk assessment, they go on to frame these issues within the larger context of best practice in forensic assessment. This book is scholarly, comprehensive, and practical-a combination that is certain to appeal to all who are (or aspire to be) involved in the process of capital litigation."--Kirk Heilbrun, Ph.D., Drexel University

"For better or worse, the United States continues to permit executions, and over thirty states house hundreds of people on death row. Mental health professionals are almost always involved in these cases. If you are such a professional, or a lawyer contemplating using a mental health expert in a capital case, this book will provide you with all the basic legal and clinical information you need. It is the only book of its kind, and well worth a look."

--Christopher Slobogin, Milton Underwood Professor of Law, Vanderbilt University Law School

"This book is a wonderful addition to the body of knowledge in capital case evaluations, presenting both legal and mental health information in depth and in a nuanced, thoughtful manner. The chapters on Atkinstype evaluations, mitigation evaluations, and the specifics of forensic assessments in capital cases are excellent guides for evaluators. For mental health professionals and attorneys who work in death penalty cases, this book is an indispensible resource."--Stanley L. Brodsky, Ph.D., The University of Alabama



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