



## **Trauma Response and the Criminal Justice System: A Virtual Summit on Knowledge, Healing, and Resilience**

### **Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma: An Attachment Perspective - Pamela C. Alexander, Ph.D.**

Intergenerational cycles among the victims and perpetrators of violence and trauma are pervasive, baffling and frustrating for criminal justice professionals to observe. For example, why do victims of intimate partner violence sometimes choose to remain with an abusive partner? Why would someone who has experienced horrible abuse by a parent choose to inflict the same on his or her own child? Attachment theory can provide answers to these perplexing questions as well as suggestions for prevention and intervention. Disorganized attachment experienced in the parent-child dyad is particularly predictive of an increased risk of revictimization by a romantic partner and of violent behavior toward one's partner, one's child or others. This presentation will delve into the dynamics of disorganized attachment, its prevalence among individuals with a history of trauma, and its pertinence to a trauma-informed approach in the field of criminal justice.

#### **Presenter: Dr. Pamela Alexander, Ph.D**

Dr. Pamela Alexander is a clinical psychologist who has recently returned to private practice in Massachusetts after serving on the faculty at the University of Memphis, the University of Maryland where she was tenured, the University of Pennsylvania, and Wellesley Centers for Women. Her research combines family violence, attachment theory, and psychotherapy outcomes. She conducted the first randomized clinical trial of group therapy for incest survivors (funded by NIMH), designed and evaluated the use of motivational interviewing with male batterers (funded by CDC and NIJ), and evaluated the Army's and Marines' New Parent Support Program (a home visitation child abuse prevention program). She is the author of 50+ peer-reviewed journal articles as well as the book *Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective* (Norton, 2015).