

Connections

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Sexual Assault Programs

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SUMMER 2008

Advocacy & Sex Offender
Management: Public Perception,
Partnerships, and the
Future of our Work

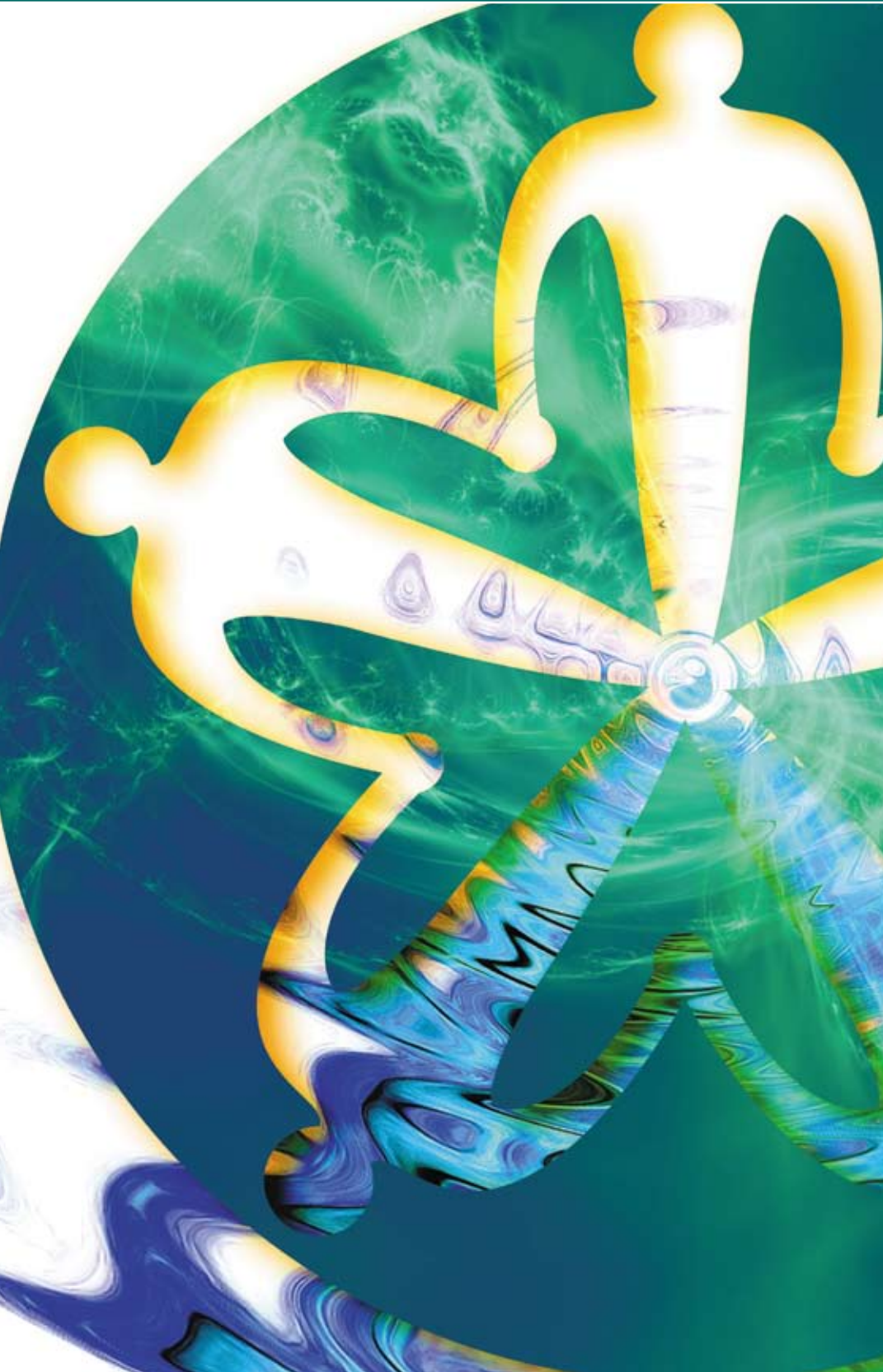
A Place at the Table:
Advocates & Sex Offender
Management

Local Spotlights

Sex Offender Treatment

Partners in Sex Offender
Management Systems

Sex Offender Management 101





TOBY SHULRUFF
Resource Sharing Project
WCSAP

Advocacy & Sex Offender Management

Public Perception, Partnership, and the Future of Our Work

Toby Shulruff

Our work to end sexual violence has always focused on supporting survivors and increasing the safety of communities. More recently, we have begun to enter the realm of sex offender management. This can seem, at first, to be a branching out from our core mission. Why would we focus at all on offenders?

The advocates and partners we have interviewed for this issue of Connections will tell you that work on sex offender management is, at heart, about supporting survivors and increasing community safety. Throughout my conversations with them, several themes took shape that can help guide us to begin, or to deepen, our work as advocates on the local and state levels with sex offender management.

Our work has long supported victims and survivors through the criminal justice system. And we have also worked to create a humane and respectful response to survivors in that system. Sex offender management takes our support beyond the time of conviction and sentencing, to the point where an offender is leaving prison and returning to the community. The work of sex offender management can be supported by the funding local programs receive from the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy.

Advocates, in partnership with sex offender treatment providers and researchers, can help to correct public misperceptions about the nature of sex offenses and sex offenders. Fed by media stories about the most heinous of sex crimes, and notification flyers on every block, the public has applied those few faces to all sex offenders. This leaves us less able to see the sex offender next door, or in our own families. As advocates we know that most sex offenses are never reported, and that most cases that are reported never reach court, much less a conviction. Therefore most sex offenders remain undetected, unknown and unaccountable.

More than ever before, folks who work in corrections, sex offender treatment, law enforcement and other disciplines want us at the table when they talk about how to manage sex offenders. We have opportunities to partner in meaningful ways in policy decisions, local management teams and in community education.

We can also learn from our partners, especially folks who work closely with sex offenders. Some of what they have to say can seem surprising. For example, that juvenile sex offenders are not necessarily destined to become adult sex offenders – in fact, most won't. Or that sex offenders with stable housing, employment and support are more likely to be successful. And success means no new offenses and enhanced community safety.

An important next step is to pause and evaluate our successes and our struggles so far. An important example of this came in this past year with the response to the Terapon Adhahn case. At first, there were calls for new laws. Taking a thoughtful approach, Governor Gregoire called for a Task Force headed by Kitsap County Prosecutor Russ Hauge, and including WCSAP, to look at the case. The Task Force evaluated what had gone wrong, what would have been different if today's laws had applied years ago when he was first caught for a sex crime, and what changes were still needed. One result of these conversations was the creation of a Sex Offender Policy Board, which WCSAP will join. Another result was increased funding for advocacy specifically for child victims of sexual abuse.

And yet, amidst these increasing opportunities for collaboration, for input and for meaningful partnerships in our work to end sexual violence, advocacy services remain vastly underfunded in comparison with resources geared towards offenders. The bottom line is that, as a society, we must invest the same resources, the same attention and the same dedication to returning survivors to wholeness.

The Mission of the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs is to unite agencies engaged in the elimination of sexual violence through education, advocacy, victim services and social change.



THIS ISSUE:
Advocacy & Sex Offender
Management

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A Place at the Table: Advocates & Sex Offender Management

Suzanne Brown-McBride
Executive Director,
California Coalition Against Sexual Assault

For years one of the leading voices in the nation on sex offender management issues, Suzanne Brown-McBride brings a clear and also nuanced perspective on the role of survivors, communities and advocates as partners with law enforcement, corrections and sex offender treatment providers in the work of ending sexual violence.

Connections: Why are you as an advocate drawn to working on sex offender issues?

Everything I do as an advocate is dedicated to ending sexual assault, to working with and on behalf of survivors.

I work on these issues because victims ask us to. I have had survivor after survivor say to me, "My perpetrator was my brother, or my father, or my babysitter, or my teacher." They describe enormously complicated feelings about their victimization and the relationship they had with that person, their families and their communities. Many survivors don't just want to know that the offender is being held accountable, they want to know that the offender is being helped, and that the person isn't going to do it again.

I work on these issues because the public asks us to. Policymakers, the media and our communities are talking about sex offenders. They want to know how they can feel safer.

Our dilemma is one of scarcity among riches

Connections: What opportunities and dilemmas do you see for advocates in working on sex offender issues?

The work of victim advocacy doesn't stop with the



Tantalus was a Greek hero from the house of Atreus, who stole ambrosia from the gods. His punishment for this theft was that he was placed in a pool of water under an apple tree. Though he grew increasingly thirsty, and increasingly famished, every time he leaned down to drink, the water would drain away. And every time he reached up to take an apple, the branch would pull away from his fingers. It is from his story that we get the word tantalize.

determination of guilt at a trial. Advocacy is across a victim's entire lifespan.

More than ever before, people are trying to figure out how to address this full range of issues. Law after law is being passed in the name of victims, and an enormous amount of resources is being spent on offender management.

Increasingly advocates are being asked to come to the table. Locally, we're being asked to help deal with offender re-entry work. At the state level, coalitions are being asked to work on policy boards and on legislation. We are being acknowledged as an essential part of sex offender management work.

But at the same time, there has been no commitment made to our capacity to be present at those tables, to our work on behalf of survivors and to ensuring that strategies are effective at promoting community safety. The very structure of support for sexual assault victims has not had anything close to a similar level of support or financial commitment.

For a lot of victim advocates, we feel like *Tantalus*. Our dilemma is one of scarcity among riches.

We are not alone in this

It has been a wonderful surprise to find that we are not alone in this work. When I speak in front of sex offender treatment providers, I always ask, "How many of you are anti-rape advocates?" There is a pause, and hands start to go up until you see every hand in the room in the air.

Treatment providers see themselves as working to end sexual violence. And they do that by managing offenders. They constantly ask me, "How can I do a better job of making sure that victims' interests are being represented? How can I make them a vital part of what we do?" Again and again they tell me that they used to provide victim services, that they work with survivors, or that they are survivors.

What wasn't surprising to me as an advocate was to learn how angry and scared communities are about sex offending. Communities learn about sex offenders when there is an imminent release or when there's been a terrible tragedy in the community. Those are not the ways that people productively learn about sex

offenders and sex offending.

However, the public's capacity and potential to take on this issue is very deep. It is possible to have rational dialogue with communities about sex offenders. It means that we really have to take the time to build relationships in community and educate people about the realities of sex offending and what sex offender management entails.

Each victim and all victims

If you talk to people about how they understand sexual violence, it has become simplified to only describe the sexual victimization and homicide of children. In the last decade we have witnessed tragic victimizations of children in the US. Everyone now knows their names – Adam, Megan, Jessica, Polly, Jacob. These names have become ingrained in our consciousness and in our hearts. No person, no family should experience what those children and their families experienced.

And as victim advocates who have worked with survivors and their families, we know that these are not the only stories. We also have to stand for every other victim of sexual violence, for victims of incest, of prison rape, of forced prostitution, and those who were assaulted by people that they knew, and loved, and trusted.

If we are actually trying to get to the roots of sexual violence, and change the conditions that lead to rape, then we have to make sure that we are talking about rape in its totality. Our work as advocates on behalf of survivors is to make sure that when we speak about sexual violence, that every one of those survivors is invoked in our hearts and in our minds.

Much of what I've learned about oppression I learned from sex offenders

First and foremost, sex offenders - people who choose to victimize another person - are accountable for their own actions. And they are also absolutely supported and excused by the culture around them. Sex offenders are a product of the culture. They learn the same lessons that we learn.

Everything I've learned about oppression has been reinforced by what I've learned from sex offenders. They

use the most horrible extension of our communities' inability to hold every member of the community equally precious. They prey upon the gaps in our systems and in our understanding. They prey upon our biases and blind spots. Some of the most highly victimized populations also tend to be the most intensely oppressed populations.

In the Northwest, it took us a decade to realize that there was an individual who was sexually assaulting and murdering sex workers. This speaks to how we as a community keep sex workers at the periphery of our consciousness and our protection.

Sex offenders have learned where they can offend without fearing intervention from the community. If you look at the intense rates of victimization among women of color, among people who lack immigration status, among women with developmental or physical disabilities, or among pre-verbal children, you see that these are portions of our communities that are fundamentally less protected.

What we know about sex offenders and how to manage them

It is important to remember, as advocates, that the sex offender management field is, like our field, a developing one. It is a field that continues to ask really important questions about what we can do to increase public safety and reduce the risk of certain offenders. *[See Washington Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers article in this issue.]*

We know that most offenders will return to our communities. Therefore it is not enough to talk simply about how we sentence sex offenders.

What we do starts with apprehension and sentencing, but it doesn't end with incarceration. It continues on into community re-entry strategies. We have started to develop collaborative strategies, structured and supervised ways including the Containment Model, for offenders to come back into the community.

We are all trying to promote offenders' success because offenders who are successful are not recidivating, not victimizing, and they **are** paying their restitution and fulfilling their obligations.



Containment Model

This collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to offender accountability through offenders' internal controls, external criminal justice controls and policy measures places victims' needs and public safety as the top priority.

Sex offender management work helps us understand that some individuals are really high risk and will always be a threat to the community. There are others who pose less of a risk. In these times when we have to be incredibly careful with our resources, we should focus on the most dangerous offenders and those who pose the highest risk.

For the advocacy community this has been challenging because every time that someone is sexually victimized by another person, it is an unbelievable tragedy. And yet, the moral and spiritual outrage we feel does not necessarily correlate to whether or not that individual will do it again.

We desperately desire that “one way” to solve sex offending. I don’t know that we ever will find that. Sexual offending is complicated just as is the impact of sexual victimization.

This is how we end sexual violence.

We are getting better at setting up cognitive-behavioral interventions that can influence sex offenders’ behavior for the long-term. We have not been as good at motivating them to be accountable for their actions and for keeping people around them safe.


A promising approach, Dr. Tony Ward’s *Good Lives* model, says that in order to make sure that we can keep offenders accountable, and thereby keep our communities safe, we are also trying to make sure that life is at some very human level meaningful -- not because we’re trying to make offenders more comfortable or happy per se, but because long-term changes in behavior require people to make commitments to those changes. On top of accountability, we are also looking for profound and lasting behavior change.

The next level of our analysis is not just saying that offenders should be successful, but also that victims should be too. The community in the aftermath of a sexual assault should not just be committed to making sure that an offender is identified, adjudicated, held accountable, and assisted in being successful upon re-entry, but that we have the same ethos with victims. That they are eligible for services, and that they receive the support they need. They should not only be offered the opportunity to heal from trauma, but also offered the opportunity for access to that

same good life.

It is tragic that the systems themselves are premised on the notion that all we can do is try to bring you as a survivor back to the place you were the moment before an assault. We should say, “As a survivor, as someone who has experienced trauma, we are going to do everything we can to move you to a place where you are stronger than you were before this happened.”

We’re not trying to move an offender back to where he was ten minutes before he committed an assault! We are trying to move him to a place where he is a better person than he ever was. We have to have the same commitment to offering survivors that opportunity. Not to go back to two minutes before the assault, but one hundred years into the future.

That is how we end sexual violence. As a community we hold the offender accountable and we hold the victim precious. We desire the best for both. We desire real success, not just to erase the mess that’s happened. 

Suzanne Brown-McBride is now the Executive Director of the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, after working for nine years in that position here at WCSAP. She chairs the recently created California Sex Offender Management Board, and serves on the board of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the steering committee of the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, and the board of the Justice Center of the National Council of State Governments. This year she received California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 2008 Crime Victim Advocacy Award for Outstanding Leadership in Advancing Victim Rights, and the 2008 Fay Honey Knopp Award from the California Coalition on Sexual Offending.

Steve Holmes

Received Gerald L. Swain Award

Retired Detective Steve Holmes was presented with the 2008 Gerald Swain Award at this year's Annual Conference in Spokane. The Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County (SACPC) nominated him for the award, saying that he "valued our work with victim/survivors – he understood the harm offenders had caused victims and he works to make our community a safer place to live."

During his decades of work with survivors in Pierce County, Steve Holmes was the motivating force behind the establishment of specialized Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence units within the Tacoma Police Department. He worked to ensure that these units would continue to provide sensitive, thorough investigations even after his recent retirement.

Steve Holmes also devoted his efforts to community safety when sex offenders re-enter the community. He would meet with newly released sex offenders to assess their understanding of the harm they had caused their victims. Even after retirement, he met with the community and with elected officials following the murder of Zina Linnik this past summer to help secure support for the intensive footwork law enforcement need to do to keep track of sex offenders in the community.

The Swain Award is given each year in remembrance of WCSAP staff member Gerald Swain, who was a quiet, yet powerful advocate for justice and healing. We are honored that his wife Kathy Swain and family were in attendance to present the award to Steve Holmes this year. Following a moving ceremony and acceptance speech, the audience of advocates and partners gave Steve Holmes a standing ovation in support of his dedication and heartfelt work for survivors. ◉



STEVE HOLMES
Retired Detective

The Swain Award is given each year in remembrance of WCSAP staff member Gerald Swain, who was a quiet, yet powerful advocate for justice and healing.



KATHY SWAIN AND FAMILY

Local Spotlight

Providence Intervention Center for Assault & Abuse

Dusty Olson, Advocacy Supervisor

Snohomish County has long been a place of community partnerships, particularly in the realm of sex offender management. As home to the state's prison-based sex offender treatment program, Providence's work creates valuable connections back to survivors and communities. Dusty Olson talks about their projects and the meaning of advocate involvement with sex offender management.

Connections: Please tell us about your work with community notification in Snohomish County

We are part of a team that offers a community notification forum when an offender is released. Oftentimes community members are coming from a place of fear regarding the offender who is moving into their neighborhood. These meetings can serve as participants' introduction to sexual assault information.

We see community notification as an opportunity to provide prevention education, and as an opportunity to emphasize that this particular offender is not necessarily a threat to you. We talk about sex offenders generally, about safety for children, and the red flags or dynamics they'd see in their own environment. We emphasize that while this meeting is about a specific known offender, there are many others we don't have posters on. We use their concern about the particular offender as the opportunity for much broader education about sexual assault and sex offenders.

Connections: How did you get involved in this work?

Our Sheriff approached us when they were developing the county's community notification plan. My colleague Barbara Haner had a relationship with a detective already. Initially, our advocates were resistant. There was a feeling that we don't serve offenders, and that they aren't who we are about. So, our medical



staff initially developed the presentation and were involved in the notification process. Over time, advocates shifted their perspective as they saw the opportunity to serve the community in practice. For us, this is not about this offender's management; we use this forum for the community's benefit.

Connections: What are the dilemmas and opportunities that advocates face in this work?

Some offenders' behavior is not consistent with our message. We've developed a scripted presentation that works for most offenders. However, if the particular offender is a stranger rapist, then that is a challenge when our presentation gives the context that most sex offenders are not stranger rapists.

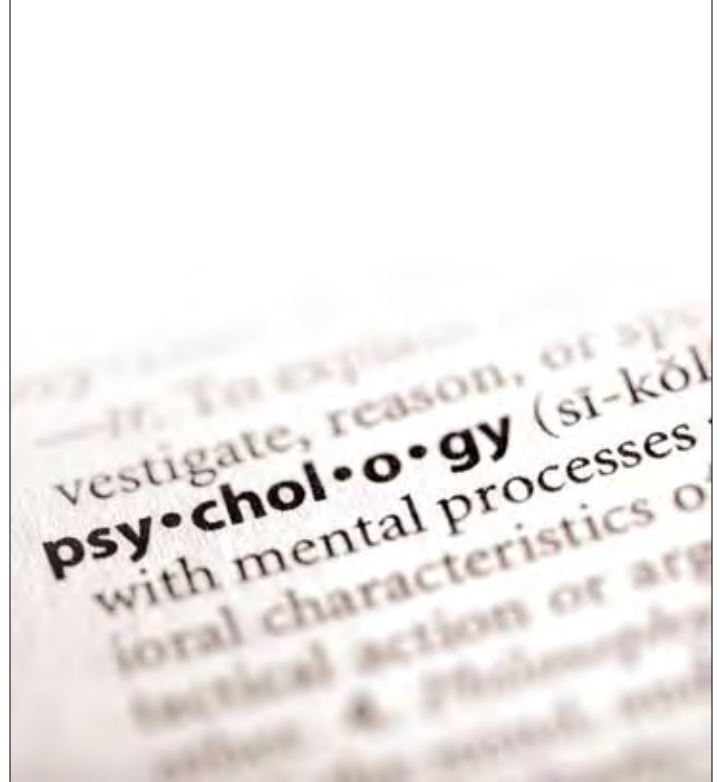
Also, some advocates do not want to do the meetings because everyone is so angry. In my experience though, even at the angriest meetings, people love hearing from advocates. The audience is usually genuinely grateful for the information. We frequently have audience members approach afterwards from neighborhood associations, school clubs or businesses. We tell them, "If you want more info, we'd be happy to present to your group."

We have noticed that over time, attendance at these meetings has gone down. This may be due to increased access to the offender information online. In response, our county has added our 30-page booklet to that offender information web page. That way, even if a community member only uses the web page as a source, they receive our education information.

One benefit of our partnership with the Sheriff's office is that I can call up the detective and get information on an offender. They are more than willing to provide that information and the offender's status.

Connections: What has been surprising for you?

The thing that surprised me the most was the reaction of family and friends of the offender in support of that offender. It is not uncommon that they will come to the community notification meeting. They are upset about how people see their loved one. We've had two meetings where offenders themselves actually came, and those were not heated meetings. But, the devotion which the family has for the offender and the fer-



Sex Offender Treatment Program at Monroe

The Department of Corrections (DOC) operates a prison-based Sex Offender Treatment Program at the Twin Rivers Corrections Center in Monroe, Washington. Sex offenders must, among five conditions, volunteer for the program, admit their guilt, have at least one year of prison remaining. Treatment includes group therapy, psycho-educational classes, behavioral treatment, and involves the family.

(From the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, "Does the Prison Treatment Program Prevent Recidivism?")

vent defense of this wonderful person even after conviction and incarceration is surprising.

It also never ceases to amaze me how surprised audiences are by the reality of sexual assault, and how wrong their assumptions are. They also tend to be uncomfortable with the use of words like “penis” – even though they are attending a meeting about a sex offender.

Communities have a level of outrage at the system. They ask, “Why are they letting him out? Why are there no restrictions?” There is a perception that locking them up and throwing away the key is the best option.

Connections: What other work do you all do on sex offender issues beyond community notification?

We joined our county’s sex offender management team after we became involved with community notifications.

We routinely have an advocate who attends triage session when an offender is about to be released. In this meeting, the various professionals are critiquing the release and service plan. The advocate’s role is to directly confront the offender’s perception of the effect of their behavior on the victim, to address the offender’s responsibility, and to ask what their plan is for meeting their obligations to the victim. In cases of familial relationship, the advocate asks if it is the offender’s intent to ultimately re-unite with the victim. The advocate is not there representing a specific victim, but to deliver the message that there is a victim.

Once a month, we go to the sex offender treatment unit at the prison in Monroe to give victim empathy presentations to offenders who are ready to be released in the next six months. We offer concrete information on the criminal justice system from the victim’s perspective. We talk about the long-term impacts of victimization. These have been an incredibly useful tool for us. We use the information about how an offender did what they did in prevention work and parent group.


These visits are a phenomenal reminder about who sex offenders are. They are nice and charming, and most are not scary-looking. They are almost done

with their treatment, and they’re still trying to manipulate you, and to minimize their behavior. It is an excellent reminder to advocates. You can then go to the victim’s family and say, “I completely understand how you didn’t know that was happening.”

Connections: Why is sex offender management a part of your work as advocates?

Not all advocates like to do this work. Where we’ve come to as a program, is that this fits the mission because it is a service to the community. It is not done for the offender.

Prevention education is part of our core services. And we see that these are prevention activities, especially community notification meetings – that this is community education. We share specific skills including how to recognize offenders, and how to see these dynamics. We had to initially make an argument for it with OCVA by explaining the beneficial outcome to the community as a whole of increasing community safety, and they support our work.

It is also valuable to have a connection with the people who work with offenders. Effective management of offenders is so important to community safety. Representing victims at that table is incredibly important to us. 

Dusty Olson is the Advocacy Supervisor for the Providence Intervention Center for Assault and Abuse, where she provides direct client services and supports the agency’s staff and volunteer advocates in their caseload of over 1000 sexual assault and abuse victims per year. She is also currently serving on the board of WCSAP.

Local Spotlight

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

Lindsay Palmer, Director of Education

KCSARC's path-breaking work on advocacy within sex offender management continues in their current innovative partnerships. Lindsay Palmer shares the history of their work and reflections on why advocates are crucial to the work of enhancing community safety.

Connections: What led KCSARC to become involved in sex offender management?

We became involved on the issues of sex offenders transitioning into the community from institutions in two ways. First through a crisis in Georgetown, a residential neighborhood set in the industrial area of south Seattle and secondly through a sex offender management team that began at the 2001 state-wide summit on sex offender management. [See also *Office of Crime Victims Advocacy* article in this issue.]

The Georgetown Guardians are a community-based partnership of victim advocacy (KCSARC), community residents and the Department of Corrections providing an additional layer of oversight, planning, resources and support for the safety of the community and the stability of the offender. This group meets twice monthly to address community safety with sex offenders living in the apartment complex in Georgetown. KCSARC and the Guardians have been the foundation to the community safety efforts in Georgetown.

The group began as the Georgetown Safety Focus Group in November of 1999 to address community concerns after 23 sex offenders were found living in an apartment complex in the Georgetown neighborhood. Other projects that have stemmed from KCSARC and the Guardians' efforts were: girls groups for two summers, three different family personal safety Saturdays, an adopt-a-street program, and trainings for Community Corrections Officers on victim impact. KCSARC has also participated in community Block

Watch and monthly presentations to the Georgetown Community Council regarding the sex offenders in the neighborhood.

The Guardians' goal is to enhance community safety by increasing awareness of the transition of sex offenders into the Georgetown Neighborhood with a community risk management team, which supports the residents of the Stevenson Apartments in becoming productive, contributing, crime-free members of the Georgetown community.

We are involved with this effort for several reasons: to have no more victims, to increase and ensure community safety, to learn innovative approaches to community safety and also to support sex offenders' efforts to become productive citizens.

We attend Risk Management Intensive Transition meetings for sex offenders who are moving into the Stevenson House Apartments, and then meet with the offenders who are currently under DOC supervision, individually for thirty minutes twice a month.

In addition, we meet monthly with the apartment manager to discuss community safety and offenders on site who are in the Guardian program, and also with Community Corrections Officers, DOC treatment providers and Risk Management Specialists. We then present a monthly update to the Georgetown Community at the community meeting.

The Sex Offender Management (SOM) Team in King County brings together law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, housing providers, victim advocates and sex offender treatment specialists. This collaborative group provides support for the safe, successful integration and management of sex offenders in communities. The group is focused on educating citizens and providing prevention information, as well as developing strategies to address the practical realities of sex offender issues and concerns. This collaboration is an example of a proactive approach that gives communities confidence and empowers citizens to keep their communities safe.

The SOM Team in King County promotes public understanding that "not in my neighborhood" is not a viable solution. Instead, communities that are aware and monitor convicted sex offenders are safer and

more empowered. An offender who is invisible to the neighborhood is a threat in hiding. Increased visibility and ties to the community help make sex offenders more accountable for their actions and decrease the likelihood of re-offending.

Team members regularly attend community notification meetings to educate residents and address their concerns about sex offender management and community integration. People who attend community notification meetings often have concerns about specific sex offenders moving into their community, safety and prevention practices and general questions about the law. Team members in attendance are knowledgeable professionals who work in various disciplines of sex offender management and victim advocacy. They are able to answer residents' questions and help attendees become more informed and empowered to protect their families and communities.

Sex offenders without stable housing are at a higher risk to re-offend. The SOM Team in King County works with local and state organizations and agencies to aid in the identification of housing opportunities for sex offenders.

The SOM Team in King County works to address public policy concerns regarding sex offenders in King County. The group advocates for legislation that keeps communities safe and encourages people to actively monitor and participate in the oversight of sex offender management in their communities.

Connections: What are the opportunities and dilemmas for advocate involvement in SOM?

The opportunities for the Georgetown Guardians project have continued to grow. We have received two awards from Department of Corrections for outstanding volunteer work. We have now begun to work with Seattle Police Department to have an officer volunteer as a Georgetown Guardian.

The dilemma is that the community feels secure and doesn't see the sex offenders as a huge problem anymore as long as the guardians are addressing the issue. It has been hard to recruit new community members because no one really wants to deal with sex offenders, people don't feel that they are at risk, and lastly they do not see the bigger issues of sexual violence



prevention as something that they can actually have impact on.

In regards the SOM Team, we have had numerous opportunities to address the cross-system challenge of sex offender management from all the different disciplines. We even spent four months doing exercises and activities to increase awareness and enhance understanding of community fear, the work of advocacy/empowerment, and the complexities of victimization. The team has created a brochure for landlords who are thinking of renting to sex offenders and has created talking points for elected officials on the significant issues and actions for safe sex offender transition and community safety.

The dilemma has been turnover in staff positions in that we lose consistency in management positions in the corrections system. When management positions change, we have to commit our time to a whole new process of stakeholder buy-in.

Connections: What's been your major insight so far?

Dialogue is essential to understanding and change. Everyone has a voice in this work. Our advocacy reaches across all disciplines, people and positions. We have to be open to hearing from everyone, including sex of-

fenders. The other insight is that it takes lots and lots of time. It has taken us years to create an open and trusting environment with the SOM Team to see our common goal of "No More Victims."

In Georgetown, it has been important to be at the monthly community council meeting. To have my face be one of the citizens who are concerned about the well-being of Georgetown at each meeting and to be sharing our contribution to that effort.

Connections: What's important to you about sex offender management?

I believe we have had the wonderful opportunity to share in a common belief, that if we work together we can create social change that will eventually lead to no more victims. I know it sounds corny and simplistic, but I really think we all believe that deep down and that is why we are at the table, why we even walked into the room.

When people have asked me "Why?" my reply back is, "Who else would you want at the table representing the needs, the concerns of victims and the insights and wisdom of victim advocacy?" If not us, then that seat is vacant. And it is hard enough to get just that one seat, because all the criminal justice systems feel that they know what needs to be done to reduce victimization. You educate people. Yet those of us who have been doing this work for years and years know the change is much more complicated than that. ◉

Lindsay Palmer is the Director of Education for King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC). Overseeing a staff of two, Lindsay works with education specialists and advocates in developing sexual violence education and prevention programs for individuals, professionals, agencies, schools, churches, social programs and communities in King County. Lindsay also teaches regular workshops for adults and youth alike. In 2002 Lindsay was named the Citizen of the Year from the Municipal League of King County and she received an honoree distinction as one of the 2005 Passionate Citizens from the Thomas C. Wales Foundation. In 2007, she was honored by Department of Corrections with the Northwest Region Volunteer of the Year.

Sex Offender Treatment

Washington Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers

Dan Knoepfler, President Board of Directors

Community-based sex offender treatment providers are crucial partners in our work to end sexual violence. Washington State has a long history of collaboration between victim services and offender treatment. Dan Knoepfler shares important information from the field of sex offender treatment, and his own experiences working with juvenile offenders.

Connections: What do we know about sex offenders' risk to re-offend?

The good news about juveniles with sexual behavior problems is that as a group they tend to be at low-risk for sexual re-offense, although they are at much higher risk for criminal re-offense in general. Research has been able to better predict which types of sex offenders, especially adults, tend to be higher risk and which are lower risk for sexual re-offense.

Many offenders aren't preoccupied with fantasies about reoffending, which we call "deviant arousal." Some are. The ones that have deviant arousal tend to be higher risk. If they have deviant arousal AND are diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder they are even higher risk.

The risk level classification and community notification system in Washington does not do a great job of separating who is higher risk from who is lower risk. This is because an outdated risk assessment tool is being used, in conjunction with local law enforcement being allowed to change the level based on their own criteria, which may have no relation to risk at all. [See also "Sex Offender Management 101" in this issue.]

Connections: What kind of treatment do sex offenders participate in to lower that risk?

We have found that cognitive-behavioral treatment approaches tend to be the most effective in working with this population. Adult sex offenders also go through cognitive behavioral treatment. Many are successful in treatment and at managing their risk.

Although historical factors, which are referred to as “static” factors are used to predict risk because they are the most reliable, current, or “dynamic” risk factors tend to be the focus in treatment because they are what can be changed to mitigate risk.

Dynamic factors that are addressed in treatment include:

- Managing deviant arousal
- Problem solving regarding securing and keeping stable housing and employment
- Working on mood regulation (depression, anxiety, etc.)
- Assertiveness training
- Social skills training
- Education about relationship development and improving their relationship skills
- Education about the laws relating to sex and sexual behaviors

Although issues such as denying the offense and not understanding the impact that sexual abuse has on the victims have not proven to be predictors of risk, they are a part of treatment. Obviously these issues can impact the victim’s progress in treatment, especially if there is contact between offender and victim.

Connections: What is important to know about sex offenders returning to the community?

The majority of offenders return to the community. And while punishment in addition to treatment is necessary, in general an unhappy offender tends to be a higher risk offender. So while harsh and draconian punishments may make people feel better because the offender paid or is paying for the crime he committed, it may actually make him more likely to continue sexually acting out.

Connections: What about sex offenses within the family?

As a treatment provider for sex offenders, the one thing I would like to say about intra-familial offenses is this: Many times the offender and victim will have



Clarification Process

This process is a step in the re-unification of a sex offender and a victim in intra-familial situations. Following preparation by both an offender’s therapist and the victim’s therapist, the family meets together with the therapists present. The offender is to accept full responsibility for the offense, and the victim and other family members have the opportunity to ask questions of the offender.

contact with each other after the court system is no longer involved.

It is interesting to note that the person who was victimized can many times see the offender as a multi-dimensional person who has more facets to his personality than only being a sex offender. As service providers, if we get locked into the idea that they shouldn’t ever see each other, and don’t do some sort of “clarification” process, we have no influence and impact on how their interactions will happen in the future.

As distasteful as it may seem to be a part of bringing an offender and victim of abuse back together to discuss what happened, it is much safer and wiser to do it under the watchful eyes of two therapists trained to deal with these issues, than leaving the two to navigate this on their own without any guidance.

For me the most rewarding aspect of the treatment process is bringing the clients together. If it is done in a safe and contained environment, it is very powerful for everyone. It is amazing how far a heartfelt apology along with an offender accepting responsibility in front of the person they abused goes in the healing process.

Connections: *How do you work together with victim-therapists?*

I have built good working relationships with several treatment providers who work with clients who have been sexually abused. The offender- and victim-therapists' ability to communicate well and work closely is really in the best interest of both of the clients, even if there is never any interaction between the clients directly or indirectly.

My final thought is that treatment providers for offenders and for victims are not that much different in many ways. People working on both sides spend much of their time helping and supporting clients lead healthy and productive lives. Mood regulation, assertiveness training, and creating a stable and safe day-to-day life are but three of the areas that overlap between the two.

It seems that providers working on both sides of the issues must help their clients face the reality of what happened, but it isn't productive for either to become overly focused, dwell on, or repeatedly rehash what has occurred, because it isn't going to change the past. Some degree of desensitization in remembering what occurred is important. Learning about what caused the behavior is important. Accepting those causes and preventing the abuse from occurring again is the most important thing, and we can best do that by focusing on today and tomorrow. ◉

Dan Knoepfler is the current President of the WATSA Board, and is a treatment provider working primarily with Juvenile Sex Offenders in King County.

Sex Offender Treatment

Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, Sexual Offender Treatment Program

Kecia Rongen, Administrator

The sexual offender treatment program within DSHS's Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration was created in the early 1990's following the Community Protection Act. Kecia Rongen shares important information about the work on the program, as well as her vision for a future approach to juvenile sex offenders.

Connections: *What is the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration's role in the treatment of juveniles?*

We receive juveniles who have committed felony sex offenses and may or may not have been on the Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative (SSODA) program, which is the juvenile equivalent of the adult SSOSA option. For the juveniles who are not on SSODA, some may come to us with a psycho-sexual evaluation, which is usually requested up front before they determine sentencing. [See also "Basic Information on Sentencing, Notification and Civil Commitment" in this issue.]

The youth come to us because the court decided that they shouldn't be out in the community doing their treatment, and so they need to go to a more secure setting. In most cases this is because they're viewed as higher risk. However, it may also simply be because there wasn't an alternative placement for them. For example, if they offended against someone else in the family, and so they can't reside in that same home, and they don't have any other relatives or friends who can take the offender, then they come to us.

We also get juveniles who have been given an opportunity to participate in the SSODA program and

then didn't succeed. The violations can vary from using drugs and alcohol, not attending therapy, being around children unsupervised, and occasionally even reoffending. Their sentences vary from 15-36 weeks at the minimum up to "juvenile life." It depends on the seriousness of their offenses as well as any criminal history.

Connections: Where are there places for survivor input?

This is an area that the whole system can improve on. They can sign up for DSHS victim-witness notification upon the youth commitment or at any time that the youth is with us. That allows non-related victims particularly to receive notification when the youth is transferring to a group home or when they've been released to parole. They are welcome to provide input to our victim-witness office at any time in regards to their wishes. That input may or may not impact what happens with the youth depending on the overall picture.

Victims who are related to the offender will receive victim services at the court level, and we encourage the case managers at the institution level to contact that family early on and ask about victim services. Is the victim in therapy, or can we provide any resources so that the victim might be able to get therapy?

When the offender is ready for the clarification process, we do request input from the victim's therapist as well as our counselor about whether we are ready to do the clarification process, reunification and safety planning for the time when the youth is returned home.

We have four institutions and they are not always close to where the family resides – and so that may be one of the obstacles to this process. In addition, some of the families don't get the victims in for counseling. This makes it difficult for us to move on with the clarification process if we don't have input from a therapist saying in fact the victim is ready or not for the offender to return home.

Connections: What is the importance of treatment and support for an offender afterwards?

JRA facilities are a contained environment. And so, even though recidivism is overall very low, it is impor-

tant to continue offender treatment while they are in the community. At that point, they are exposed to many different things that may make them less likely to be successful. It is important for a treatment provider to be checking in with them and to see how they're doing. Our parole period is up to 2-3 years with certain sex offenses. The youth may or may not be in treatment during that whole period – it depends on the progress the youth has made in treatment.

When working with juveniles who are returning to the family, it is important to include them in the treatment process. We have moved to evidence based practices in the last six years. One of these interventions is Functional Family Therapy, provided by a therapist, which utilizes the family as the client, rather than seeing only the offender as the client. If this is identified as a need with a youth who has sexually offended, we provide it as an addition to sex offense specific treatment. This usually occurs before sex offense specific treatment has occurred or at the end.

We also have Functional Family Parole which is based on Functional Family Therapy. In that case, the parole counselor works with the family as the client, rather than just the offender. They are dealing with issues in the family context. If he's been missing school, if he's not making it to treatment, they are sitting down as a family to figure out what's going on.

Connections: Do families in rural areas encounter challenges?

In some of our regions, counties are really spread out. In some cases we have parole staff that are transporting our juveniles hours at a time each week so that they can make their counseling sessions. If a family does not have resources to provide that transportation to treatment or to a school other than the one a victim attends, and probation staff are not available to do so, then that will make it much more difficult for them to remain in the community.

Connections: And remaining in the community can be part of the stability that can contribute to offender success?

Absolutely.

Connections: Why is our approach different with

juveniles than with adults?

Recidivism is relatively low with juveniles, between 3-14% depending on which study you look at. We know that juveniles are different than adults because patterns of sexual abuse and arousal are developing and not yet fixed. A very small number of them actually have an Antisocial Personality Disorder, or will develop paraphilias (such as being aroused to children). We find that they had something going on within their life and unfortunately the way that they dealt with it was that they committed a sex offense. They are much less likely to recidivate than adults [and that rate is also quite low].

My ideal is that we would recognize that juveniles are different from adults. A recent report from Human Rights Watch has indicated that the impacts of community notification and registration may have unintended consequences for juveniles. This can impact their ability to go to school, to obtain employment, to retain stable housing and to be successful in our communities. When these things are undermined, they can lead to community safety issues, and may lead a juvenile offender into our adult system.

I think that so far in our state, we have not treated juveniles very differently from adults. What we've learned and what the research is telling us now is that you can't do trickle down approaches with juveniles from the adult model. You really need to be looking at the whole picture. What's going on with the family? Does the youth have developmental or mental health issues? Do they have drug and alcohol issues? You really need to be treating the whole youth, and understanding that the sex offense is part of that as well.

Connections: What assumptions do we need to challenge?

We need to challenge the public's perception of sexual offenders. We need to do a lot more education around the reality of sexual offenders, and on warning signs for the community to be aware of. It is great to know where these registered adults and juveniles are located, you also need to be aware of those offenders who haven't been caught in your community. We tend to hear only about the most horrific crimes in the media. These are such a small portion of sex offenses. Yet, unfortunately people generalize what they hear in

the media to all sexual offenders.

Connections: How can advocates be involved?

It is really important to have the victim advocates at the table. I have heard from the coordinators at each of the regional offices that the sexual assault victim advocates are there and that the awareness of what each of them is doing in their fields is really important.

It is really helpful when we are trying to do reunification and clarification. To have somebody to call up and say, "Here's the situation, I have a family who needs some counseling, but they don't have any resources, and do you have any idea what we can do about that?"

At the policy level, our approach is try to rehabilitate juvenile offenders and it's important to have a balanced approach with community safety and advocacy. If we are saying the same things as victim advocates are saying - it is a much more powerful message. ◉

Kecia Rongen has worked for the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) since 1996. She started her career with JRA as a residential counselor in a specialized treatment unit for youth who have sexually offended at Maple Lane School. She was also a parole counselor and treatment coordinator for youth with sex offenses in the community. She has served in her current position as Administrator of specialized treatment programs for youth who have sexually offended since 2004. She was recently appointed to the newly formed Sex Offender Policy Board as JRA's representative.

Partners in Sex Offender Management Systems

Office of Crime Victims Advocacy

Bev Emery, Managing Director

As the key funder of sexual assault services in Washington State, OCVA's work as a vital voice of victims' interests within state government is sometimes less visible. Bev Emery shares the power of advocacy within systems and reflects on the need for advocates' work on sex offender management.

Connections: Why should advocates work on sex offender management?

Advocates' involvement with sex offender issues is crucial because these issues have a direct impact on victims' well-being and sense of safety.

Also, the opportunity to lead and influence communities is profound. Advocates understand the dynamics of sexual assault and the systems that both offenders and victims move through. Advocates have a tremendous amount of knowledge to share with communities.

Connections: What questions have you heard from survivors?

Survivors have expressed bewilderment about sentences. Also, there are so many agencies working with offenders: the ISRB (Indeterminate Sentence Review Board), the ESRC (End of Sentence Review Committee), and others. Survivors often have no idea that they exist until they're thrown into it. *[See also Indeterminate Sentence Review Board article in this issue.]*

Communities ask, "What can I do to protect my family?" After reading an article or finding an offender on the Web, they express outrage, "How could the state let this happen?!"



Sexual assault programs have asked if working on sex offender management is an eligible activity with OCVA contract funds. This work is absolutely systems coordination, and leadership in communities. Community Sexual Assault Programs (CSAPs) in King County, Spokane, Clark County and Snohomish County have been working on sex offender management for years now.

Connections: How did you become involved in working on sex offender issues?

We see ourselves in this work on behalf of victims of sexual assault. Victims' interests are a central part of the sex offender management system.

It is important that people understand how insightful and visionary WCSAP was in bringing the voice of victims and advocates to the table number of years ago. That took courage and leadership.

Suzanne [Brown-McBride, then Executive Director] and WCSAP started conversations about needing to step into this work. The Partnership for Community Safety was the first formal group we were involved with. Initially, I went to support WCSAP and didn't want Suzanne to have to be the only victim advocate

in the room. The more I was around that table, the more it made sense to me for advocates to be involved.

That is why we worked with the Department of Corrections and WCSAP to hold the first Sex Offender Management Summit in Yakima in 2001. We brought together teams of advocates, sex offender treatment providers, community corrections and law enforcement to work more closely together. *[See also King County Sexual Assault Resource Center article in this issue.]*

Now, Washington is looked to as a model, especially in terms of including the victims' perspective.

Connections: What is the role of OCVA in state government related to sex offender management?

State agencies have the opportunity to interact with the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management (OFM), as well as other state agencies. As a part of state government, we have the opportunity to assist in shaping the Governor's response and influence on policy. We have the opportunity to inform OFM staff from the victims' perspective.

The interaction between state agencies is not always as visible from the outside. We have a distinctly collaborative and consultative way to influence the priorities and policies of other state agencies. We help to bring the victims' perspective to their role.

Also, we have the opportunity to influence the work within the Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development (CTED), which houses OCVA. CTED's Housing Division is doing some work on sex offender housing. In some cases that kind of internal, informal and intentional influence can get farther.

Connections: What have you learned in doing this work?

On the practical level, my biggest learning was the connection between housing and sex offender stability and success. When a sex offender is homeless, he is also more dangerous to the community.

In terms of the big picture, it was both a surprise and disappointment to see how sensational media coverage has made it so that we can't have a rational conversation about sex offenders. That is really dangerous. We find that often policymakers are pushed to where they can't be rational either.

This is the biggest challenge for the new Sex Offender Policy Board, which was created this past Legislative Session. Can this multi-disciplinary group bring good research and factual information into the conversation? Can it use that information to educate policymakers and communities?

Partnership for Community Safety


The Partnership for Community Safety developed a "collaborative approach to the reintegration process as high-risk offenders return to the community." Partnership recommendations included access to housing, community education, effective community supervision, support services, victim and family Support and Pre-Release Linkages.

The Partnership consisted of state and local elected officials, the DOC, DSHS, the Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development, HUD, Regional Support Networks, local law enforcement, courts, victims advocates, family advocates, private for profit and nonprofit treatment providers, supporting services providers, and faith-based organizations. WCSAP's Executive Director co-chaired the Partnership.

Connections: What trends do you see emerging in this work?

I see that research is crucial as we move forward. For example, research on the efficacy of community notification efforts. We are on the brink of learning important things about juvenile sex offenders and how they are a separate population from adults. *[See also Washington Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers and Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration articles in this issue.]*

There has also been a shift towards spending huge amounts of money on a very small population, for instance through cost of incarceration and electronic monitoring. Not only is this an ever-increasing percentage of local and state budgets, but there is a huge difference in comparison with our willingness to provide funding for victim services and prevention.

These trends make it even more important that there is a continued presence of victims' voices as part of thoughtful, careful strategies to address this problem. We need to evaluate what we have already put in place, and then learn from that for the next policies we put in place. 

Bev Emery is the Managing Director of the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy in the Washington State Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development. Prior to her work in state government, she was the Executive Director of WCSAP.

Sex Offender Policy Board

The Sentencing Guidelines Commission (SGC) is to convene a sex offender policy board of 13 voting members including WCSAP, and advised by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The board will keep current on research, best practices and trends; conduct case reviews; develop and report on benchmarks; and provide a space for collaboration. Members also include:

- Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
- Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Indeterminate Sentencing Review Board
- Washington Association for the Treatment of Sex Offenders
- Department of Corrections
- Washington State Superior Court Judge's Association
- Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration
- Office of Crime Victims Advocacy
- Association of Washington Cities
- Washington State Association of Counties
- Special Commitment Center
- Sentencing Guidelines Commission (two non-voting members)
- Criminal Justice Division in the Attorney General's Office (non-voting)

Partners in Sex Offender Management Systems

Intermediate Sentence Review Board

Jeri Costa, Chair

Former State Senator Jeri Costa is a long-time victim advocate, and is currently the chair of the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board. Her dedication to victim rights has led her to crucial work on sex offender management issues. She took the time recently to speak with Connections.

Connections: *What trends have you seen over time regarding sex offender management and victims' roles in that process?*

In 1976, my personal experience following the sexual assault of my sister was that we “accidentally” found out about the plea bargain in the case. The deputy prosecuting attorney said to my father, “I don’t work for you, I work for the state.” It is highly unlikely that you’d hear that now.

The system is now more focused on how we can work to prevent sexual assault in the first place. By listening to survivors share experiences about how they came to be victimized, it helps to paint a picture of how sex offenders identify victims -- and who they look for. This gives us a sense of how to prevent sexual assault from happening, and also how to prevent sex offenders from re-offending.

We have had major gains in sex offender treatment and risk assessment. Every year we have more information and research from all over the world. We can identify offenders at an earlier age and intervene. And if they have already offended, we can give them tools to help themselves to not do so again.

Connections: *What is next in our work?*

Advocates made the tough decision to focus not just




on survivors, but also to move onto the realm of the management of offenders. That was a huge leap. When I began offering victim awareness classes for offenders, it was hard for the board of Families and Friends of Violent Crime Victims, where I was the Executive Director, to support that.

We came to see that the goal is really to reduce victimization. Sex offender management puts the focus on the offender and takes it off of the victim. Our society is so quick to blame the victim, and yet we are all responsible for preventing sexual assault.

We need to continue to build on that knowledge of risk factors and interventions. Regardless of whether we are systems-based or in the field, or at a local sexual assault program, everyone in this arena should be working together to hold a comprehensive approach to managing offenders in prison, and in communities. It takes all of us.

We also really need to continue educating the public. It is always easier to put our heads in the sand, to imagine that this won’t happen to me. The more we educate the public in terms of what to look for, and how to identify the signs, the more likely we are to stop sexual assault from occurring in the first place.

Overall we have seen major changes, but we have a long way to go. 

Partners in Sex Offender Management Systems

Indeterminate Sentence Review Board

Ellen Hanegan-Cruse, Victim Liaison

Until recently, the ISRB has not been a well known part of the sex offender management system. With a dramatically increasing caseload and a crucial role in determining an offender's ability to re-enter the community, advocates can benefit from Ellen Hanegan-Cruse's insights about victim input and support through the ISRB.

The Indeterminate Sentence Review Board (ISRB) is our state's equivalent of what is often called a parole board. The Board considers whether or not an offender is fit to be released back into the community. The Sentencing Reform Act removed offenders convicted after 1984 from the jurisdiction of the Board. Under the SRA, offenders receive a "determinate," or set sentence within a range based on the seriousness of the crime they committed, the number of prior offenses and any aggravating or mitigating factors.

The Board had been closing down as the number of remaining pre-1984 cases diminished to today's level of only 300 offenders with lifetime maximum sentences for homicide, rape or burglary. However, since the creation of "Determinate Plus" sentencing for sex offenders in 2001, the Board has been growing to accommodate the sharp increase to 1,600 cases now under their jurisdiction. Of that number more than 1,300 are sex offenders sentenced under the new Determinate Plus sentencing structure. [See also "Sex Offender Management 101" in this issue.]

In considering whether an offender can be released back into the community, the ISRB considers all the information on file about the case, including any victim statements that might have been made in the court case or sentencing. They also consider any treatment the offender may have received, including sex offend-



er or substance abuse treatment, as well as their behavior while incarcerated.

Connections: How does a victim become involved in the ISRB's process?

We initially search through the information from the Prosecutor's office for victim input at sentencing. Once an offender arrives at the Reception and Diagnostic Center at the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton at the beginning of his incarceration, we try to contact the victim. We try to find contact information through old police reports and database searches.

We let them know that the ISRB process exists, and that they may be contacted in the future. They can give input at that time in a statement, or when the actual hearing comes up they can provide input in-person or telephonically.

Survivors and their families often come to us in the midst of a crisis - the potential release of their offender. For a few folks, they feel that they have already gotten what they needed out of the process, and so they aren't interested in providing further input.

For those who are interested, they wonder if the offender will know that they talked to us. Some want to know how much they can influence the Board's deci-

sion. Should they start a letter-writing campaign, for example? They also want to know how the offender is doing, and whether he received treatment and is “cured.”

For the victims in the pre-1984 cases who were only kids when the case went through the courts, they may just want to be validated as a person, as a victim in the case, because they didn’t have the opportunity then. Also, the impact statement may change as the victim grows up. They may say, “I want my voice to be heard.”

Connections: At what points in the process do you notify a victim?

We provide notice of each upcoming hearing, and then about 6-8 weeks following the hearing we send notice of the board’s decision. We also notify about the date of release from confinement, where the offender will be released and the conditions of that release. We will also let them know if there is a violation and a violation hearing.

Connections: What kind of support do you offer to victims?

We provide information, support for the victim and for parents of children. I listen to their concerns, talk about sexual assault protection orders and refer them to a local Community Sexual Assault Program (CSAP), or a local program in their state if they don’t live in Washington. We ask if they have received counseling, and if so might they need to go back as this process continues?

I also help them decide how they would like to give a statement – in-person, video, telephonically, in writing. I will schedule an in-person or telephonic appointment. I will also assist them in writing the statement, in which they could address:

- What changes have happened since the victimization?
- Has the impact changed, continued or gotten worse?
- Now that you’ve had a chance to reflect, is there more that you would like a decision-maker to know?

Connections: What other parts of the system do you coordinate with?

We coordinate with the Victim Services Program at the Department of Corrections by sharing information around victims’ safety concerns, and additional information about the case that is not in the file. We can refer to Crime Victims Compensation and assist with trying to get claims re-opened. We also work with the Department of Social & Health Services Victim/Witness program.

We refer to courthouse programs, and to legal advocates at CSAP’s for help with protection orders. We can also assist with identity changes, or suggest how to go about finding an attorney.

Connections: How can advocates work with the ISRB to support a victim?

Advocates need to be involved in offender re-entry because we are so concerned about public safety, and because we are so concerned about victims.

Advocates can attend hearings as a support person to the victim. They can help to demystify the process by having knowledge of each piece in the process. They can work to help the victim identify the steps, and who key people are in each step.

Advocates can call me with questions, or visit the website www.srb.wa.gov. Personal contact is welcome and valuable. It is so good for everyone to be on the same page.

Connections: What trends have you seen in your work as a victim advocate?

When I began working on the local level we were focused on victim-centered policies and procedures for medical exams, prosecution, and investigation. Now post-sentencing is the arena where we need to improve and create victim-centered policies and practices.

The community as a whole now realizes that when sex offenders go to prison, they do get out. We need to do everything we can to make sure they receive treatment, and are successful in reentering society with appropriate supervision and services.

We now see the advocacy community welcomed at the table in all practices around sex offender manage-


ment. Policy-makers and decision-makers see that they are not in this alone, that it takes all of us. That victim safety is also community safety, and so we have to hear from victims.

Victims now know that they have a right to be heard and actually will be listened to. And we are aware of the need to protect the information that victims give us.

There is more awareness for policy-makers and decision-makers about sex offenders, the different typologies, how they behave and how they offend. And we have seen an increased use of risk assessment tools and evidence-based practices.

Connections: Given these trends, what is next?

We need to work on public understanding and misconceptions about sex offenders. On the other hand, there is so much research coming out, and we need a way to get a clear message from all of that.

The next challenge is to put teeth into victims' rights statutes, to provide for the enforcement of those rights and create a penalty for not honoring victim rights. We also need to work to help judges be open to victim involvement. 

Ellen Hanegan-Cruse has worked in the field of victim advocacy for over twenty years. She is currently the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board Victim Liaison. Past experiences include: Advocacy Services Coordinator for the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, Victim Advocate in several prosecutors' offices and trainer and presenter on victim advocacy issues.

Partners in Sex Offender Management Systems

Department of Corrections, Victim Services Program

Steve Eckstrom, Program Manager

Steve Eckstrom has worked to shape and grow DOC's Victim Services Program to best serve the needs of victims and communities of offenders under DOC jurisdiction, both in facilities and under community supervision. He shares vital information about DOC's services for victims, as well as his reflections on decades of victim advocacy.

Connections: What are the points of victim input in DOC process regarding sex offenders?

While we inform people when they enroll in our program that they can contact us any time regarding questions or concerns, we specifically seek their input when a sex offender proposes to be released to a certain address, or when DOC staff in a particular county are asked to develop a release plan for a sex offender. Any input received is conveyed, with the victim's identifying information protected, to both the prison counselor and community corrections staff assigned to develop or investigate the proposed release plan.

We also notify enrolled victims prior to the offender's transfer to work release or release to the community, when they escape or are apprehended following an escape, when an offender dies while in DOC custody, and when they leave a DOC facility under in-custody escort for certain types of trips into the community. Enrollees are invited to let us know of any questions or concerns that arise when they receive these notifications.

When a victim has been threatened by an offender, or the offender is pursuing a relationship with a victim without the victim's consent, Victim Services Program staff solicit input from victims regarding supervision



conditions, geographic restrictions, or other measures that might be available to attempt to mitigate the risk to the victim.

Finally, we alert enrolled victims regarding upcoming reviews in their cases by either the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board, [See also *Indeterminate Sentence Review Board* article in this issue.] or the Pardons and Clemency Board, and let them know where they can obtain information about how to participate in those processes if they so choose.

Connections: What support is available to victims through DOC?

We provide notification as indicated above for those victims who enroll in the notification program. In addition, we answer questions regarding DOC's involvement with the offender throughout the time the offender is in prison or on supervision, intercede to terminate unwanted or unlawful contact from offenders during confinement or supervision, assist victims with finding needed resources in their communities, and facilitate a collaborative approach to safety planning with victims who have safety concerns with offenders under the jurisdiction of DOC.

Connections: What should advocates know about your program and about DOC's part in sex offender management?

The Victim Services Program is committed to providing victims with the information and access to the decision-making process that they need in pursuit of their safety and well-being. We strive to be a connection point in the Department both for victims and their advocates as they choose to be active in sex offender management in their cases.

Connections: What have you learned in your work on sex offender management over the years?

I think the most important thing I've learned in this area is that it is important to listen to what victims have to

say, and to refrain from any assumptions about what victims want and need from the criminal justice system and from the community in the management of sex offenders. I've often been surprised when I listen with a truly open mind to what victims and survivors tell me is important to them.

Connections: What trends have you noticed?

The trends, both in sentencing and in sex offender management in the community, are of course toward longer confinement and more restrictions on offenders in the community. Though the expressed, and usually sincere, intent of such initiatives is the pursuit of greater victim and community safety, the intensity of the emotions that fuel them can sometimes obscure the potential for unintended consequences that can actually weaken victim and community safety.

Connections: What needs our immediate attention going forward?

I would hope that we can soon take a deep breath, survey what we have accomplished in public policy over the past twenty years or so, consolidate our gains, back away from policies that have proven counterproductive, and make some measured decisions about what we can realistically do to fill the remaining gaps. And as we do that, I hope we will listen to victims and survivors, as many as possible, and recognize the full range of their needs and aspirations. ◉

Steve Eckstrom has worked for the Washington Department of Corrections as the Victim Services Program Manager since October 2004, and as the Community Victim Liaison Manager from November 2001 to September 2004. Prior to that, he was Advocacy Services Program Manager with the Washington State Office of Crime Victims Advocacy in Olympia beginning in October 1990, and the Director of the Victim/Witness Assistance Unit of the Snohomish County Prosecutor's Office in Everett, Washington beginning in 1981. He has been active for many years in statewide efforts to strengthen rights and improve services for crime victims, serving as a founding board member and the first Chairperson of the Washington Coalition of Crime Victim Advocates. Before moving to Washington in 1979, Steve worked for several years as a counselor and program manager in a residential treatment program for juvenile offenders. He received his MSW degree from the University of Washington in 1981.

Partners in Sex Offender Management Systems

Department of Social and Health Services Victim/Witness Notification Program

Elyse May, Program Administrator

Serving more than 2.1 million people in Washington each year through five major branches ("administrations"), DSHS has four key areas of direct interest relating to sex offender management. Elyse May, who is responsible for the victim/witness program for all of DSHS, shares information relevant to advocates, survivors and communities.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Victim/Witness Notification Program will notify victims or witnesses regarding offenders committed to DSHS facilities. Notifications occur when offenders are released, transferred, or escape.

An important part of what our office can assist victims with is information and education regarding DSHS commitment programs. We can help to educate victims on the differences between commitment to a state Mental Hospital versus the Special Commitment Center (SCC). Also, the process by which sex offenders are civilly committed to the SCC can be confusing, so we try to help victims understand the process. [See also "Sex Offender Management 101" in this issue.]

The Special Commitment Center (SCC)

This facility, located on McNeil Island, is where sexually violent predators can be civilly committed after their criminal sentence is completed.

In 2001, DSHS was required by the Legislature to "develop recommendations for improving the procedures used to notify victims when a sexually violent predator is conditionally released to a less restrictive alter-



native...while at the same time maintaining the confidentiality of victim information." [2001 c 286 § 10.]

As a result of the stakeholder workgroup's recommendations, DSHS has developed a process by which victims of SCC offenders may share their concerns regarding the location of the proposed Less Restrictive Alternative placement and how it may affect them. If victims have concerns regarding SCC sex offenders they can call our office and we will assist them in contacting the appropriate facility and staff to express their concern.

Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA)

JRA manages residential treatment programs, community programs, parole services, treatment services, and administrative programs for juvenile offenders committed to the state's custody. These facilities include the following institutions; Green Hill, Maple Lane, Nassele, Echo Glen & the Basic Training Camp. JRA has six community residential facilities - also referred to as group homes - and contracts with two privately operated community facilities.

Juvenile sex offenders are prohibited from attending

the same K-12 school as their victim and the victim's siblings. For JRA offenders, the Victim/Witness office tracks which school the offenders will be attending when released and with the information received from the victim/sibling we ensure that the offender does not attend the same school. It is imperative that victims complete and return a Sex Offender School Attendance brochure to our office if they are concerned about the offender attending their school.

If victims have concerns regarding juvenile sex offenders they can call our office and we will assist them in contacting the appropriate facility and staff to express their concerns. [See also *Juvenile Rehabilitation* article in this issue.]

Western State Hospital & Eastern State Hospital

Mentally ill offenders committed to state mental hospitals have many of the same requirements as offenders sent to prison. For instance, they have registration and notification requirements. If victims have concerns regarding sex offenders committed to state mental hospitals they can call our office and we will assist them in contacting the appropriate facility and staff to express their concerns.

You can contact DSHS Victim/Witness Notification at:

P.O. Box 45130
Olympia, WA 98504

1-800-422-1536 or 360-902-7832

Fax: 360-902-7855

Email: mayem@dshs.wa.gov

Website:

www1.dshs.wa.gov/Legrel/VictimWitness/index.shtm

Partners in Sex Offender Management Systems

Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

Dawn Larsen, Director of Projects

A long-time partner in sex-offender management, WASPC leads efforts by law enforcement to address sex offenders in the community. They also lead several projects aimed at increasing community safety relating to sex offenders.

Connections: How is WASPC involved with sex offender management?

Law enforcement's work is to monitor sex offenders in the community and to provide information when registered sex offenders move into a community. Providing public information and public education is crucial. For example, we know that the more stable offenders are, (i.e. having access to stable housing, employment, treatment) the less likely they are to re-offend.

At the direction of the Washington State Legislature, WASPC recently updated its Guidelines for Washington State Law Enforcement Adult and Juvenile Sex Offender Registration and Community Notification. This model policy is intended to provide guidance to law enforcement agencies and assist in the development of their own operating policies and procedures.

WASPC is also conducting research on methods of electronic tracking of offenders other than GPS (global positioning system).

We have purchased a computer program called "Offender Watch." This program assists law enforcement in monitoring registered sex offenders. For sex offenders who are required to register every 90 days, it will generate a notice to law enforcement that a particular offender didn't meet his registration requirement, allowing for more immediate follow up. It also

automatically sends consistent, accurate information to the Washington State Patrol and to WASPC for the state database of registered sex offenders and the state public notification website. In addition, the service has pre-formatted community notification flyers and postcards that can be distributed by mail to an identified area.

WASPC operates the SAVIN (Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification) program, which currently offers notification to victims and other interested people that an offender has been released or had another change in custody status. The SAVIN program includes a feature where a person can register for notice of a change in a sex offender's compliance with registration requirements. For example, if an offender does not register on his regular 90-day check-in, a notice would be sent out.

Connections: What are the requirements for local law enforcement in regards to community notification?

The kind of notification that is required varies with each notification level.

Level I sex offender: (defined as those at low risk to re-offend within the community at large). Agencies must notify school principals if the offender is, or will be, attending their school; agencies are required to share information with other appropriate law enforcement agencies; agencies may disclose information upon request to any victim or witness to the offense and any individual community member who lives near the offender's residence or where the offender expects to reside or is regularly found. RCW 9A.44.130, RCW 4.24.550(3)

Level II sex offender (defined as those at medium risk to reoffend within the community at large). Level I guidelines PLUS the agency is authorized to release relevant, necessary, and accurate information to public and private schools, child day care centers, family day care providers, libraries, businesses and organizations that serve primarily children, women or vulnerable adults, and neighbors and community groups near the residence where the offender resides, expects to reside or is regularly found. RCW 4.24.550(3)

Level III sex offender: (defined as those at high risk to reoffend within the community at large). Level II no-

tification guidelines PLUS the agency is authorized to release relevant, necessary, and accurate information to the public at large including publishing in at least one legal newspaper with general circulation in the area of the sex offender's registered address or location; publishing a current list twice a year; and posting on the statewide website or a local website updated monthly. RCW 4.24.550(4)

Community forums are not required, but we feel that they are a good thing to do.

Connections: How can advocates be involved with community notification?

The Guidelines include a section on notification and community forums. The model policy says there ought to be a community team, including advocates, law enforcement, therapists, school personnel, prosecuting attorney offices and community members. We encourage involvement from Community Sexual Assault Programs.

Advocates may want to offer to set up a community forum. Most law enforcement departments don't have the resources to do so themselves. You can invite community partners to a task force to plan a community forum, and to discuss what information to disseminate.

The community forum can be an opportunity to talk about all the things we do. We can talk about the low recidivism rates for sex offenders, and move the conversation into how to prevent sexual violence and protect the community. The community often does not understand that there is a distinction between different types and levels of sex offenders. That is part of public education and advocates, full grasp of this issue is important in the community forum. The community needs to hear from Community Sexual Assault Programs and law enforcement.

Connections: What are critical next steps?

The 2008 Washington State Legislature provided new funding for law enforcement to do face-to-face monitoring of sex offenders. This is a new opportunity to enhance existing partnerships or to create new ones.

We should bear in mind that sex offender registration

is for community safety, not a license to target offenders.

We should continue nationally and on the state level to look at how best to keep communities safe. ○

Dawn Larsen, MA, is currently the Director of Projects for the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, including sex offender community notification, victim notification, the DNA project. She started 23 years ago as a volunteer for SafePlace.

New Washington State Laws in 2008

The following legislative proposals from the 2008 Session became law this year.

Sex Offender Policy Board – SB6596

A sex offender policy board is created under the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to include representatives from many disciplines involved with sex offender management. The board is to be a forum for current information, collaboration and review of certain cases and policies.

Failure to Register as a Sex Offender – HB 2714 & HB 2786

HB 2714 makes failure to register as a sex offender a class B felony. HB 2786 says that Level I (lower risk) sex offenders who fail to register may now be added to the state's notification website. Generally, only Level II and III offenders are listed on the website.

DNA Collection for Sex Offenders – HB 2713

The list of offenses for which a DNA sample of the offender will be collected is expanded to include certain non-felony sex offenses.

Authority of Tribal Police Officers – HB 2476

Police officers from tribal jurisdictions that have met certain conditions and who have been certified as general authority Washington Peace Officers may have expanded jurisdiction over non-Indians on tribal lands and beyond tribal land boundaries in some circumstances. This is of particular relevance in expanding tribal police officers' ability to address sexual assault cases.

Admissibility of Evidence in Sex Offense Cases – SB 6933

The prior sex offenses of a defendant in a sex offense case may be introduced in court, even if those acts did not result in a past conviction.

Criminal History in Sentencing – HB 2719

During sentencing, the criminal history of a defendant is considered valid if he fails to challenge that history.

Additional "Most Serious Offense" – SB 6184

This bill adds out-of-state convictions with sexual motivation which had a minimum sentence of 10 years or more to the list of "most serious offenses." When an offender has committed three "most serious offenses," he is considered a persistent offender under what is commonly called Washington State's "three-strikes" law.

Sex Offender Management 101

Sentencing, Notification, Civil Commitment & Recidivism

Sex Offender Sentencing

The sentencing of sex offenders in Washington State is complicated, and is based in part on the year of the crime, the offender's criminal history, the nature of the offense, and aggravating/mitigating factors. Offenders prior to the Sentencing Reform Act did not have a definite term of incarceration and supervision. From 1984-2002, sex offenders did receive a sentence within a standard range. Since 2002, sex offenders go before the ISRB to determine if they will be released into the community.

Since 1984, the Special Sex Offender Sentencing Alternative (SSOSA) has been available for lower-risk, first-time offenders who agree to treatment in lieu of longer prison terms. The juvenile equivalent is the Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative (SSODA) – differently called because a juvenile receives a disposition, not a sentence. In a recent study by Lucy Berliner of the Harborview Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP), 71% of parents did not support a community-based sentencing alternative like SSOSA, however 69% of child victims did. (From "Sex Offender Sentencing Options: View of child victims and their parents.")

Risk Assessment, Leveling, Registration & Notification

In Washington State, a sex offender's notification level (I, II or III) is first set by the End of Sentence Review Committee (ESRC) as an offender is nearing release back into the community. Following release, local law enforcement are able to "depart" from that level to allow for changing, dynamic, conditions (especially homelessness) or for additional information local law enforcement might have about the offender.

The Washington State Sex Offender Risk Level Classification Tool used by the ESRC to set this original level is a combination of older risk assessment tools as well as notification considerations. Those older risk assessment tools are the 1995 version of the Minnesota Sex Offender Screening Tool (MnSOST) and the Rapid Risk Assessment for Sexual Offense Recidivism (RRASOR). The level is based on static factors such as past offenses, childhood experiences, and other things that will never change, as well as dynamic factors such as age, substance use, homelessness and other factors which might change in the future.

Sex offender risk assessment is most accurate when based on actuarial data, best known for its use by insurance companies. Research has shown that subjective data such as “having a creepy feeling” about a person is not linked to their risk to re-offend. We also know that basing risk level on the seriousness of the crime of conviction, as recent federal Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act does, also does not accurately predict future sex offenses.

Since 1990, sex offenders must register with local law enforcement, and that information is maintained in registration database by the Washington State Patrol. The registry is intended for use by law enforcement to enhance public safety. Of the information in the registry, basic information about higher-risk offenders is used in community notification by local law enforcement and on the state’s Sex Offender Information website.

The extent and format of community notification about a registered sex offender is determined by his risk level as set by the ESRC or altered by local law enforcement.

Civil Commitment

Washington State was the first in the nation to allow the state to involuntarily commit certain sex offenders to civil confinement and treatment following the end of their prison sentences.

“Sexually Violent Predators (SVPs)” are sex offenders who are found to have a mental abnormality which makes them more likely than not to commit another sex offense. The End of Sentence Review Committee (ESRC) reviews and refers cases to the Sexually Violent

Predator Unit of the Attorney General’s office (or the King County Prosecutor for cases in that county). Offenders found by a court to be SVPs are kept at DSHS’s Special Commitment Center on McNeil Island.

The courts found that civil commitment must be for the purposes of treatment in order to be constitutional, and a less-restrictive alternative must be available to SVPs who are successfully meeting treatment goals.

In Washington State, 305 people were held under civil commitment as Sexually Violent Predators in 2006, at a cost of \$40.5 million that year. (From WSIPP’s report, “Comparison of State Laws Authorizing Involuntary Commitment of Sexually Violent Predators: 2006 Update, Revised.”)

Recidivism

Sex offenders commit new sex offenses at a lower rate than offenders in other crime categories.

- In Washington State, sex offenders’ recidivism rate for any kind of felony offense is 13%, for violent felonies it is 6.7% and for felony sex offenses it is 2.7%.
- Sex offenders who successfully complete SSOSA have the lowest recidivism rates of all sex offenders, whereas offenders who serve a prison term have the highest rates.
- Sex offenders convicted of failure to register have recidivism rates more than twice those of sex offenders who comply with registration - 34%; 14% and 5% respective to the rates cited above.

(From WSIPP’s report, “Sex Offender Sentencing in Washington State: Key Findings and Trends.”)

A 2005 report by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy stated that the notification levels do not “accurately reflect [offenders’] risk for reoffending.” (From WSIPP’s report, “Sex Offender Sentencing in Washington State: Notification Levels and Recidivism” for more information.)

For information about becoming a supporting member of WCSAP,
please e-mail us at wcsap@wcsap.org, or call (360) 754-7583.

Online Sex Offender Management Resources

Center for Sex Offender Management (www.csom.org)

CSOM's website includes a wide variety of information for those involved with sex offender management.

Washington State Institute for Public Policy (www.wsipp.wa.gov)

WSIPP is nationally known for the quality of their research and reports.

Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (www.atsa.com)

ATSA is a national membership organization for sex offender treatment providers, researchers and others whose work relates to sex offenders.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (www.ncjrs.org)

NCJRS is an outlet for almost every publication produced by and for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institutes of Justice and many other branches of the US Department of Justice.



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