

Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending,
Registering, and Tracking (SMART)
FY 2010 Comprehensive Approaches to Sex Offender Management Newsletter
September 2011

Introduction

This second edition of the SMART CASOM Newsletter highlights new publications in the area of sexual assault prevention; provides tips for practitioners about how to manage secondary trauma; shares an update on SORNA implementation in states and tribes around the nation; highlights a number of sex offender policy updates and publications; provides an overview of the June 2011 webinar on victim centeredness in sex offender management; and provides information about an upcoming training opportunity for sex offender management practitioners.

Preventing Sexual Abuse: New Resources for the Field

The prevention of sexual assault is a topic that is garnering increased attention in sex offender management work today, as the field moves toward thinking not only about “how can we manage sex offenders?” but to “what can we as practitioners do to help to stop sexual violence before it happens?” To this end, two new resources are available that explore effective approaches to preventing sexual violence and the implications for our collective work.

“The Prevention of Sexual Violence: A Practitioner’s Sourcebook”

Drawing together the work of dozens of leaders in the field, this book is grounded in public health as an approach to violence prevention. It defines what prevention is and demonstrates how often even a simple gesture can have a significant impact. In

this way, readers can identify actions anyone can take to prevent sexual violence. Through a progression of 30 chapters, the Sourcebook provides practical approaches to prevention and describes the underlying frameworks that support each approach. The Sourcebook begins by introducing cutting edge prevention approaches along with a broad sampling of nationally recognized programs to illustrate the power of well designed prevention efforts. To foster the development of innovative new prevention programs, a section of the Sourcebook is dedicated to how to approach prevention oriented approaches. The Sourcebook concludes with an examination of the role of cultural issues in the prevention of sexual violence and offers insights for influencing local and national policy change. Chapters cover the spectrum of topics from internet safety, influencing public policy, and addressing sex offender notification practices, to creating effective prevention programming for children and teens, organizations, adults in the community, and young adults on college campuses. This Sourcebook is appropriate for any professional who wants to incorporate the prevention of sexual violence into their practice or enhance the quality of existing services. To obtain a copy of the sourcebook, visit <http://bookstore.nearipress.org/>.

Prevention and Education Materials on the NSOPW

The SMART Office has also compiled a very helpful collection of sexual assault prevention and education materials for children, teens, and adults as part of the

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Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW). Each section is prefaced by facts, which are followed by prevention and education materials and additional links to resources designed to assist parents and caregivers. To access this information, visit <http://www.nsopw.gov/Core/Resources.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>.

Managing Secondary Trauma

As practitioners, being able to effectively manage sex offenders means that we are in the position of having to understand both the trauma experienced by the victim and the actions taken by offenders. It is, as one would expect, extraordinarily difficult to be exposed to this kind of information on a daily basis without being “traumatized” ourselves. The symptoms we might experience are, of course, less severe than the symptoms experienced by victims, but can still be harmful to our personal and professional lives. Not everyone who works with sex offenders incurs secondary trauma, but the potential is surely there, and those who do experience it can be affected in a variety of negative ways.

Secondary Trauma: Common Symptoms, Consequences

As professionals who work with victims and offenders, we may be overcome with powerful, persistent emotions, and sometimes these emotions can have physical and psychological effects on us. Some of the more common manifestations of secondary trauma for practitioners who work with sex offenders include:

- Depression
- Anxiety, fear, paranoia
- Helplessness, hopelessness
- Physical symptoms
- Withdrawal, isolation
- Relationship difficulties
- Unhealthy coping responses

These issues may surface as a result of some of the common aspects of any profession involved with the management of sex offenders, including a routine exposure to the trauma and harm inflicted on others, being privy to the details of sex crimes and offenders’ offense histories, and seeing firsthand the impact of sexual violence on victims and families. Additionally, many who work with sex offenders can regularly face hostility, resentment, or resistance from some offenders and/or a low motivation for change. With high caseloads and little time to “recover” from these ongoing challenges, it is not surprising that professionals can and do suffer from these symptoms. These challenges can be exacerbated by some of the inherent demands placed on those who work with sex offenders on a regular basis, which often can include a high level of scrutiny and pressure (internally, from their own agency, and/or from victims or members of the public); high caseloads; long /untraditional hours and being “on-call”; a lack of recognition or positive reinforcement; insufficient training, supervision, and support; and working in an adversarial or non-collaborative team climate.

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Common Consequences of Secondary Trauma and Ways to Mitigate It

If left unchecked, the symptoms of secondary trauma can translate into a host of challenges for sex offender management professionals, including:

- Increased absenteeism, tardiness
- Inattention to detail, missed deadlines
- Reduced performance and productivity
- Office tension, conflict with colleagues
- Cynicism, hostility, resentment toward clients
- High turnover rates

In order to guard against these issues, agency leadership should acknowledge and appreciate the potential for these phenomena and raise awareness of these issues for new hires, existing staff, and seasoned practitioners alike. Likewise, routine opportunities for employees to process cases with colleagues and supervisors should be created to establish an open, supportive environment. Agencies should also not only ensure that staff receive the necessary training, supervision, and mentoring to work most effectively with this population, but should also support employee wellness programs and make staff aware of the availability of employee assistance programs that might be available to aide them in mitigating the effects of working with sex offenders.

Agencies charged with sex offender management would also do well to

promote and expect multidisciplinary, multiagency collaboration with their colleagues in the field. In this way there is a strong sense of shared responsibility and joint decisionmaking; the opportunity to provide and receive routine, ongoing support from colleagues from other agencies who are managing the same caseload, albeit from a different perspective; can allow for a forum to process and debrief challenging cases; and can offer a unique opportunity to celebrate progress and successful outcomes as a team, rather than focusing only on the negative or challenging aspects of the work.

Examples of Self-Care Strategies

There are many steps individual practitioners can take to help ward off, or even prevent, the effects of secondary trauma. Some ideas include:

- Set aside a formal time each week/bi-weekly to process difficult cases as a team
- Identify a seasoned, supportive, on-the-job mentor or coach
- Ask for help, consult, seek a “second opinion” with a challenging case
- Seek skill-building and professional development opportunities
- Stick to a work schedule (i.e., don’t come in early and stay late routinely)
- Leave work at the office – figuratively and literally
- Find time to get away, take a vacation or mini-break
- Engage in healthy stress management techniques (e.g.,

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- meditation, biofeedback, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga)
- Track sleep patterns, ensure adequate rest
 - Seek supportive employee assistance programs or mental health services
 - Engage in a hobby, leisure, or recreational activity
 - Establish a new exercise schedule, routine
 - Volunteer for a non work-related entity
 - Explore, maintain spirituality
 - (Re)invest in healthy intimate and family relationships
 - Establish, schedule a routine “family/friend/date night”
 - Spend time with close friends outside of the workplace
 - Explore, create a list of life’s \
 - Rate extent to which your daily activities align
 - Adjust accordingly
 - Have calming photos readily accessible (e.g., vacations, children, partners, pets)
 - Internalize the reality that unsuccessful outcomes happen, despite your best efforts

Working with sex offenders and/or victims of sexual assault is incredibly important work, but certainly comes with a considerable demand on time and energy. For more information on this topic or to download or share a free training curriculum on secondary trauma, visit <http://www.csom.org/train/trauma/index.html>.

33 Jurisdictions Substantially Implement SORNA

33 jurisdictions (15 states, 16 tribes and two territories) have substantially implemented SORNA's requirements. The States of Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming; as well as the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, Ohkay Owingeh, Osage Nation, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Pueblo of Isleta, Tohono O'odham Nation, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe; and the United States territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have been found by the SMART Office to have substantially implemented SORNA.

For more information about SORNA, visit the SMART web site at:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/index.htm>

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Sex Offender Policy Updates

Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative (SOMAPI)

In March 2011, the Office of Justice Programs, through its SMART Office, began

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work on the Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative (SOMAPI), a project designed to assess the state of research and practice in the field of sex offender management. As part of this effort, SMART is working to gather information about current research and best practices in the field and is seeking the assistance of national membership organizations to help provide information about the needs of the field. Following this information-gathering phase, the SMART Office will convene a 1 ½ day forum this coming winter, at which invited national experts will gather to discuss SMART's assessment and further refine what is known about the current state of sex offender management, gaps in research and practice, and the needs of the different disciplines involved in this work.

Recommendations from this forum will be used to shape the agenda of SMART's 2012 National Symposium on Sex Offender Management and Accountability, to be held in New Orleans, LA on August 7-9, 2012. Participants will learn from national and local experts and government officials about the latest and most promising practices in adult and juvenile sex offender management, including prevention, investigation, arrest, prosecution, sentencing, correctional programming, reentry, supervision, treatment, registering, and tracking sex offenders across the country, as well as current research on these topics.

The culmination of SOMAPI will help guide OJP's sex offender management research, policy, and grant making efforts into the

future and provide direction to the field on how best to protect the public from sexual violence.

[New Publication on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#)

"A Reasoned Approach: Reshaping Sex Offender Policy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse" has been developed by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, and suggests that it has only been in recent decades that society has "begun to fully recognize child sexual abuse as the devastating problem that it is, to portray the trauma of sexual abuse in the media, and to seek ways to prevent and eliminate sexual violence." The authors make recommendations on how to encourage the primary prevention movement forward in three categories:

1. Design and implement evidence-informed policy;
2. Develop successful community policies that expand the notion of what constitutes abuser accountability; encourage community responsibility and healing; and provide safety, restitution, healing, and avenues for input for victims; and
3. Integrate what is known about perpetration into prevention programs, victim services, and public education.

The report suggests that if these recommendations are pursued, society can create a new wave of legislative, community, and organizational policies that

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can effectively prevent re-offense and engage individuals, families, and communities in primary prevention. A full copy of the report can be found at <http://www.atsa.com/sites/default/files/ppReasonedApproach.pdf>.

Sex Offender Enactments Database

The National Council on State Legislatures (NCSL) has developed a new resource designed to allow users to search for key sex offender-related legislation enacted between 2008 and 2011. Users can search legislation across states or by topic, year, sponsor, or author. Searches can be conducted on topics including registration requirements, DNA and fingerprinting, juvenile registration, registration duration, time, and other requirements, and civil commitment. To access this unique new resource, visit <http://www.ncsl.org/?TabId=19158>.

Webinar Overview

Many thanks to all of the CASOM grantees who attended the June 22, 2011 webinar on Promoting Victim Centeredness in Sex Offender Management. We were fortunate to have Beth Barnhill, Executive Director of the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, as well as a team from Rhode Island (Marlene Roberti, Director of Policy & Education of Day One Rhode Island; Christine Imbroglio from Rhode Island Probation, and Jessica Labenberg, Victim Advocate), and Melissa Schmisek of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, serve as faculty. The highlights of the webinar included an overview of the victim-centered

approach, the benefits of such an approach, an overview of the partnerships formed between supervision, treatment, and advocacy agencies that have led to more reasoned and effective approaches to sex offender management. For those who were not able to attend and would like to view the webinar, please visit <http://wm.yourcall.com/CEPP/CASOM062211.wmv>. We welcome your ideas for topics for future webinars. Please feel free to suggest a topic by emailing CSOM at lgilligan@cepp.com.

Annual ATSA Conference: Registration Now Open

Registration for ATSA's annual conference is now open. Visit www.atsa.com for more information, or to download videos of last year's plenary sessions (see <http://www.atsa.mindbites.com/> to access this new resource).



Next Newsletter

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The next newsletter for CASOM grantees
will be published later this Fall.



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