

Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending,
Registering, and Tracking (SMART)
FY 2010 Comprehensive Approaches to Sex Offender Management Newsletter
April 2013

Introduction

This edition of the newsletter for CASOM grantees features:

- Information about Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month;
- A discussion of recent findings from the National Institute of Justice regarding the use of electronic monitoring with sex offenders;
- Highlights from recent articles about banning sex offenders from local neighborhoods in California; and
- Important upcoming dates and events.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Sexual Assault Awareness Month



IT'S TIME ... TO TALK ABOUT IT!

Talk early, talk often. Prevent sexual violence.

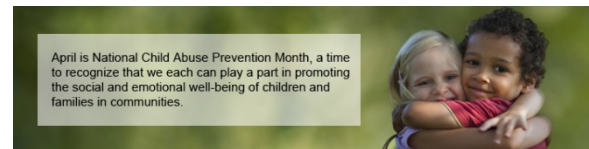
From the National Sexual Violence Resource Center: The 2013 National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign focuses on healthy sexuality and its connection to child sexual abuse prevention. This April, join the conversation. Start talking about healthy childhood development to prevent child sexual abuse.

The upcoming SAAM campaign provides tools and information on healthy childhood

sexual development that adults can use. By learning about the characteristics of healthy sexuality, adults can better identify risks, support healthy boundaries and challenge negative messages. These tools support parents, community members and organizations as they work to [prevent child sexual abuse](#).

For more information, visit the SAAM web site at <http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/sexual-assault-awareness-month-home>.

Child Abuse Prevention Month



In 1983, April was proclaimed the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month. As a result, child abuse and neglect awareness activities are promoted across the country during April of each year. The Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (OCAN) within the Children's Bureau coordinates Child Abuse Prevention Month activities at the Federal level, providing information and releasing updated national statistics about child abuse and neglect. Many governors also issue proclamations to encourage initiatives and events in their States. Today, the Child Abuse Prevention Initiative continues to be an opportunity to create strong communities to support families and keep children safe. Visit the [National Child Abuse Prevention Month website](#) for more information on the most current resources and national efforts.

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New Research Findings: NIJ Reports on the Utility of Electronic Monitoring with Sex Offenders

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has released an [overview](#) of their recent research project that examines the impact of GPS monitoring on the recidivism rates of sex offenders in California. Below is a summary provided by NIJ of the study's goals, methodology, and key findings.

Researchers examined the effectiveness of using GPS to monitor high-risk sex offenders placed on parole in California. The NIJ-sponsored study included 516 high-risk parolees who had been released from prison between January 2006 and March 2009. Half of the parolees wore GPS monitoring devices in addition to receiving traditional parole supervision, which involves regular contact by parole agents and weekly sex-offender treatment classes ("GPS group"); the other half received only traditional parole supervision ("traditional group"). Researchers tracked each parolee for one year following his initial parole date. The study found that those placed on GPS monitoring had significantly lower recidivism rates than those who received traditional supervision.

The study involved:

- An outcome evaluation to assess both the cost of the GPS program and its effectiveness in reducing the criminal behavior of high-risk sex offender parolees.

- A process evaluation to assess the program's design and implementation.

The researchers collected information from the state's data management system and examined official arrest records, parole supervision records, GPS monitoring data and state cost information. In addition, they conducted a survey of roughly 1,000 California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) parole officers. The survey included questions about the GPS monitoring system, caseloads, program staffing and screening of high-risk sex offender parolees.

The researchers found that parolees in the traditional group — those not placed on GPS monitoring — committed new crimes and had their parole revoked more often than did parolees in the GPS group. In addition, the traditional group returned to custody at a rate 38 percent higher than the GPS group.

The cost analysis showed that in California, monitoring parolees using GPS costs approximately \$35.96 a day per person, while the cost of traditional supervision is about \$27.45 a day. The GPS program is more expensive but more effective. Although the GPS program costs \$8.51 more per day than traditional supervision, the GPS approach produced a decrease of 12 percentage points in arrests for any offense (from approximately 26 percent to 14 percent). In addition, offenders who were monitored using GPS complied with the terms of their parole at higher rates than did offenders on traditional parole.

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The cost of California's GPS monitoring is lower than the cost of moving parolees to "indefinite civil commitment," which entails sending sex offenders whose prison sentences are over, but who are believed to be too dangerous to release into the community, directly from confinement in prison to confinement in dedicated institutions. Such civil confinement programs can cost an average of more than \$100,000 a year per person because of the programming that must be provided.

The researchers also examined the degree to which the GPS program delivered services as designed. Through a process evaluation that looked at responses from the survey of parole agents as well as GPS monitoring data, they found that CDCR had developed a protocol for the GPS program and largely followed that protocol while implementing the program. Based on their findings, the researchers made several recommendations.

Reexamine the identification of high-risk sex offenders. To identify high-risk populations, California currently uses the standardized Static-99 risk instrument, which measures "static" factors that do not change over time (see related article, ["Predicting Recidivism Risk: New Tool in Philadelphia Shows Great Promise"](#)). However, in the survey of parole agents, nearly half of respondents said that the Static-99 does a poor job of identifying high-risk sex offenders. The researchers noted that the current risk instrument may predict recidivism, but those convicted of noncontact offenses such as exhibitionism pose less of a threat than do rapists and

child molesters. Thus, the researchers recommend using a system that accounts for the different recidivism risks among offenders and the varying threats to public safety.

Monitor attendance at treatment classes. CDCR mandates that high-risk sex offender parolees attend weekly treatment classes. However, the researchers found a disconnect between parole agents and service providers in terms of tracking treatment attendance; 100 parolees had no record of attending treatment during the study period. Further, in the survey of parole agents, only 75 percent of agents said that their parolees attended treatment at least once a week. Previous research indicates that the meticulous monitoring of sex offender treatment is an important facet of sex offender supervision and that sex offenders who stop attending treatment have higher recidivism rates. The researchers recommend that parole authorities strictly monitor and enforce weekly class attendance.

Use graduated sanctions that balance cost and risk. Instantly sending someone back to prison for a minor violation is costly. GPS supervision costs \$35.96 daily, whereas the cost of keeping someone in a California prison is about \$129 per day. The researchers recommend that CDCR — rather than issuing blanket parole revocations and sentencing violators to go back to prison for a few months at a time — employ a graduated sanctions system for dealing with parole violations. Such a system weighs the gravity of the offense against the need to preserve public safety,

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thereby increasing the likelihood that a parolee with a serious violation is incarcerated, while one who presents less danger is still sanctioned but in a less restrictive, less costly manner (for example, by imposing a home curfew on the offender). The researchers added that California is in the process of piloting a new, structured decision-making system for dealing with parole violations, which will allow parole agents to scientifically weigh an offender's risk level and the benefits of alternatives to prison as part of their decision-making process.

Mandate the use of zones. The researchers also found that parole agents were neglecting to use inclusion and exclusion zones. Such zones are intended to keep parolees either within certain areas, such as home and work, or away from certain places, such as schools or parks that attract many children. In the process evaluation, the researchers found that only 60 percent of parole officers always or often discussed the limits of inclusion zones, and only half discussed exclusion zone limits. The researchers argue that the use of zones may be the most important GPS tool because the application of zones allows parole officers to be alerted to specific offender movements. Thus, they recommend making the zones compulsory.

Use a monitoring center to screen alerts. The large majority of parole agents (89 percent) reported in the survey that GPS monitoring was more time-intensive than traditional supervision. Until fairly recently, officers were receiving alerts when offenders tampered with the GPS device or

committed other detectable violations. These alerts might also have included incidents such as an offender being in the basement of a building, sounding an "alarm" simply because someone was out of reach of the GPS monitoring system for a few minutes. From January 2009 until December 2010, paroled California sex offenders generated 1.5 million alert notifications. The researchers noted that according to an internal CDCR document, officers spend 44 percent of their time monitoring movements by GPS and only 12 percent of their time in the field.

To help remove the burden on agents of responding to "minor" alerts, California switched to a centralized monitoring system in 2011. Under the new system, two vendor-operated centers screen the thousands of GPS alerts that agents receive each month and respond to the more technical alerts, such as a battery that has run too low. The centers forward alerts that are more serious to parole officers, allowing officers to focus more closely on direct supervision and on responding to real threats to community safety.

Limit caseload to 20. GPS increases the information that officers receive about parolees, but reviewing this information is time-consuming and reduces the time available for direct supervision. As noted, agents spend only about 12 percent of their time in the field. According to the researchers, the best way to ensure that parole agents have sufficient time to directly supervise offenders is to limit the caseloads of GPS parole agents. In fact, the researchers found in their outcome

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evaluation that the size of the caseload was correlated with parole violations and with parolees returning to custody. Therefore, the researchers recommend smaller caseloads of no more than 20 people per officer.

Finally, the researchers noted that GPS monitoring is not a panacea. The systems can give false positives for violations. For example, sometimes a monitored offender "disappears" simply because he is in an underground location, forgets to recharge the battery that powers the system, or even decides to go to sleep under an electric blanket that disrupts the GPS signal. In these instances, the system would send an alert even though no criminal activity was taking place.

The researchers also pointed out other possible limitations of their work. The study lasted only a year, and results may vary over longer periods. In addition, at least one previous study found that once the GPS monitoring ends, offenders who had been monitored by GPS do just as poorly as other offenders.

Researchers at Development Services Group, Inc., of Bethesda, Md., and Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., conducted the study of California parolees. Read their final report to NIJ, [Monitoring High-Risk Sex Offenders With GPS Technology: An Evaluation of the California Supervision Program \(pdf, 114 pages\)](#).

In the News

Neighborhoods Seek to Banish Sex Offenders by Building Parks

The New York Times and other media outlets have recently reported on efforts to effectively ban sex offenders from California neighborhoods by constructing "mini parks" to drive sex offenders out of those neighborhoods, as California state law prohibits registered sex offenders from living within 2,000 feet of a school or a public park. The Times notes that "From the metropolis of Miami to the small town of Sapulpa, Okla., communities are building pocket parks, sometimes so small that they have barely enough room for a swing set, to drive out sex offenders. One playground installation company in Houston has even advertised its services to homeowners associations as an option for keeping sex offenders away." To read the article in full, visit

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/us/building-tiny-parks-to-drive-sex-offenders-away.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

Important Upcoming Dates and Events

National Adolescent Perpetrator (NAPN) Network 2013 Annual Conference

The NAPN 2013 28th Annual Conference will be convened from April 8-10, 2013. The theme for this year's event is "Seeing the Forest for the Trees: An Ecological Perspective on Juvenile Sexual Offending." This conference is sponsored by the Kempe Center for Prevention & Treatment of Child Abuse & Neglect, University of Colorado

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School of Medicine, with Support from the Kempe Foundation and is hosted by the Oregon Adolescent Sexual Offending Treatment Network (Hosted by OASOTN). The event will be convened at the Double Tree Hotel in Portland, Oregon. For more information, visit <http://csom.org/index.html>.

Mid-Atlantic Region Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (MARATSA) Conference

The 5th Annual MARATSA Conference "Learning Together, Working Together" will be convened on May 8-9, 2013 at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For details, visit http://csom.org/pubs/MARATSA%20eBlast_V5.pdf.

New York State Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers 2013 Conference

The 18th Annual Joint NYS ATSA and NYSASOSP Conference will be held May 20-22, 2013 at the Hilton Albany, which is located at 89 State Street, in Albany, NY. Workshop and poster session proposals can be submitted to: nysatsa@gmail.com.

2013 National Sexual Assault Conference: "Inspire a Movement, Invest in Change, Imagine..."

The National Sexual Assault Conference is a two and a half day, advocacy-based conference providing advanced training

opportunities and information regarding sexual violence intervention and prevention. This year's conference is hosted by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault and be convened from August 28-30, 2013 in Hollywood, California. For more information, visit <http://www.nsvrc.org/nsac>.

Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers 2013 Conference

The 32nd Annual Research and Treatment Conference sponsored by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers will be held at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers in Chicago, Illinois, October 30 through November 2, 2013. This conference will offer symposia, workshop presentations, poster sessions, discussion groups, and advanced clinics relating to issues in both victim and perpetrator research and treatment. All sessions, with the exception of posters, have been approved for [Continuing Education](#) credits. Each presentation will provide information and training based on cutting edge research development and clinical application. In addition to the three-day Conference schedule, ATSA will offer a selection of intensive half- and/or full-day Pre-Conference Clinics. For more information, visit <http://www.atsa.com/conference>.

Prevention & the Child Protection Professional: Implementing Effective Child Abuse Prevention Programs

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**PREVENTION AND THE
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PROFESSIONAL**
Implementing Effective
Child Abuse Prevention
Programs



**Mall of America's
Great Room**
Bloomington, Minnesota
July 22 - 24, 2013

 N·C·P·T·C
NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION
TRAINING CENTER



This national conference is designed for child abuse prosecutors, investigators and other child protection professionals. This three-day course will assist professionals in recognizing the factors in their communities contributing to child abuse, and expose them to numerous evidence-based prevention programs that can be implemented in their communities.

*Crimes Against Children Conference:
Providing Professionals the Instruction,
Information and Strategies They Need to*

*Protect Child Victims and Prosecute their
Offenders*

This event is a nationally and internationally-recognized conference for professionals from the fields of law enforcement, prosecution, child protective services, social work, children's advocacy, therapy, and medicine who work directly with child victims of crime. This year's conference will be held from August 12-15, 2013 at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel in Dallas, Texas. Please visit <http://www.cacconference.org/dcac/default.aspx> for more information.

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter for CASOM grantees will be published in June 2013.



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