

State of
Alaska



Department
of
Corrections

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The Sex Offender MONITOR

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Working Together To Protect The Public From Sexual Violence

Alaska Implements Evidence-Based Practices to Manage Sex Offenders

By Deputy Commissioner Portia Parker

Sex offender management practices have significantly improved in other jurisdictions over the past 20 years as more and more information is discovered regarding this complicated, diverse, and often manipulative and secretive group of offenders. The use of the post-conviction polygraph as a tool in sex offender treatment and supervision has made more and better information available to guide and develop effective public policy.

Although greatly underreported (only about 16% of sexual assaults are ever reported to authorities), Alaska has one of the highest rates of sexual assault in the nation, with an estimated fiscal impact to the state budget of \$45 million per year due to sexual victimization. Over the past three years, the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) has made improving its sex offender management practices a top priority. DOC consulted extensively with national experts in the field, evaluated the research, reviewed the results, and currently is in the process of implementing practices that have proven to be effective and that have shown positive outcomes. DOC's enhanced evidenced-based program takes a community and victim-centered approach to the management of sex offenders.

Although sex offenders are a diverse group, we know from the research that most sex offenders victimize the young, vulnerable, weak and/or helpless. According to the National Women's Study, 61% of sexual assault victims are younger than 17 years of age, with about 30% younger than 11 years of age. Some of the most alarming information disclosed through treatment/polygraph research is that sex offenders as a group are extremely active (having hundreds of victims), often spend a substantial amount of time searching for and grooming potential victims, and tend to be a threat to nearly any vulnerable and available person, regardless of age, gender, race, etc. (commonly referred to as crossover behaviors).

Treatment using polygraph discloses critical information and dangerous behaviors previously unknown, and therefore previously untreated and unmanaged. One sex offender treatment provider aptly compared the use of the polygraph in sex offender treatment and supervision to the use of urine analysis/drug testing in substance abuse treatment and supervision. No one would think of providing substance abuse treatment without using urine analysis/drug testing, and no one should provide sex offender treatment without using the polygraph - without it, we are flying blind and not effectively treating or supervising the offender. In a study conducted by Abrams and Ogard, 1986, sex offenders supervised with polygraph were 69% successful on probation, while sex offenders supervised without the polygraph were only 26% successful.

The primary goals of Alaska's sex offender management program are community and victim safety, reduction in re-offense rates and successful behavior change/life change by the sex offender. We are fully aware that these are extremely difficult goals to achieve, but it is our duty to do the best we can to protect the public from sexual violence. That is precisely why DOC is implementing evidence-based practices to manage convicted sex offenders.

For additional research citations, please contact Harriet Harris at harriet_harris@correct.state.ak.us

HELP—The DOC is actively recruiting treatment providers and polygraphists to provide services to the Sex Offender Supervision and Management Project. If you know of a qualified individual please let them know to contact Billy Houser at (907) 334-2310 (polygraphists) and Rose Munafa at (907) 269-7416 (treatment providers)

Lessons Learned From Initial Sex Offender Polygraphs



The goal of Alaska's new sex offender management program is enhanced community and victim safety.



The first polygraphs for Alaska's sex offenders were conducted during the week of March 20, 2006. Of the eight offenders who received polygraph examinations, seven were convicted sex offenders. Two of the offenders made admissions during their initial polygraph raising concerns about their behaviors since being released on parole. These two offenders then received maintenance polygraph exams, bringing the total examinations to ten.

These eight offenders admitted to a total of 163 additional victims during the examinations. These added victims had not been previously identi-

fied through charges, court records or treatment. Even with this striking number of victim admissions, deception regarding the number of victims was the most frequent reason for an offender's deceptive polygraph result.

One offender, in particular, exemplifies the need for developing a best practice model that includes the use of polygraph examinations for the supervision and management of sex offenders within the state of Alaska. While originally charged with Sexual Assault 2nd degree, he was convicted of Attempted Sexual Assault 2nd degree. During treatment this offender

admitted to 9 additional victims on his sexual history form, however, he admitted to more than 100 adult victims and 58 child victims by the end of his first polygraph. He was one of those who received a second examination, during which he was deceptive regarding the use of pornography and alcohol.

Results for April's polygraph examinations continue to underscore the importance of having polygraph examinations as a tool in the treatment, supervision and management of sex offenders.

Strategic Planning Meeting

The purpose of the strategic planning meeting for the Sex Offender Management Project was to look out over the next 30 days, 60 days, 6 months, 12 months, and beyond to identify the timelines, tasks, and work groups which need to be organized in order to successfully implement sex offender management statewide by July 1, 2007. The majority of those attending the meeting have been serving on the Sex Offender Oversight Working Group (SOOWG). An important decision for this group was to define what goals the DOC wants to meet

with the new Sex Offender Management Program. The primary goal is to obtain and share information to increase public safety. The five foundational components to achieving this goal are:

1. Victim-centered program
2. Multidisciplinary collaboration
3. Utilize a containment strategy (treatment, supervision, and polygraphs)
4. Consistent policies that empower staff to make decisions in the field

5. Process for quality control and performance management

While all work groups are instrumental to the project's successful implementation, a work group seen as a key initial piece is the one responsible for the revision and updating of the DOC Standard Operating Procedures for supervision of sex offenders in the institutions and in the community. This group is moving forward and will have SOPs ready during the beginning of the next fiscal year.

SB 218 Becomes Law

On April 27, 2006, Governor Murkowski signed Senator Bunde’s SB218 into law. SB218 is "An Act relating to sex offenders and child kidnappers; relating to periodic polygraph examinations for sex offenders released on probation or parole; relating to sexual abuse of a minor; relating to the definitions of 'aggravated sex offense' and 'child kidnapping'; relating to penalties for failure to report child abuse or neglect; relating to sentencing for sex offenders and habitual criminals; and providing for an effective date." In summary, SB218:

- Increases sentence lengths for the most egregious Unclassified and Class A sexual felonies against a child (under 13) to a minimum sentence of 25 years,
- Increases sentencing for Unclassified and Class A sexual felonies against a victim 13 years or older to a minimum of 20 years.
- Restructures and increases sentences for Class B and Class C sexual offenses, and
- Requires periodic polygraph testing for all sex offenders on probation or parole.



April Training for Probation/Parole Officers

April 4th - 9th, Institutional and Field POs from around Alaska gathered on the APU campus in Anchorage to attend the training. During the training a unifying theme emerged—the desire of both institutional and field POs for increased collaboration.

Institutional POs questioned where they fell within the grand scheme of the new approach of containment of sex offenders. It soon became clear, especially after the breakout session where the smaller groups each contained field POs (FPO), institutional POs (IPO), and treatment providers, that institutional POs have a wealth of information which has been collected from their interactions with their offenders throughout their incarceration. IPOs have details such as:

- The offender’s visitors

- Who is corresponding with the offender
- Phone contact and topics
- Offender’s known associates
- Reading level
- Behavior on furlough
- Sexual behavior

This information is invaluable to field POs as they supervise sex offenders in the community and yet there did not seem to be a uniform system to share this critical intelligence. Each group brainstormed on ways to pass information from the IPO to the FPO. OTIS came up as a method to accomplish this but with the caveat that training needs to be done system wide so that everyone is entering and looking for the information in the same location. Additionally, it would be beneficial to start communication between the IPO, FPO and the

treatment provider six months prior to an offender’s release. This networking could initially be done through emails, with a teleconference thirty days prior to release.

Another suggestion was for IPOs to create a sex offender transition file and link it to the release information. This file could serve as a mechanism to gather information to ensure it gets to the FPO. An added benefit is having this information readily available to psychologists preparing offenders’ risk assessment in the institution.

In the end, the April training was informative not only for the POs attending but also for the organizers.

More than 100 POs, and treatment providers from across the state attended training on The Containment Model and The Use of the Polygraph as a Tool in the Supervision and Management of Sex Offenders in Alaska.

What's in a Mission Statement

During the May 2006 Strategic Planning meeting, the group was also charged with identifying the mission for DOC's Sex Offender Management Program. "**Working together to protect the public from sexual violence**" was chosen as the mission statement because this phrase:

- Was specific enough to allow progress to be tracked, provide accountability to staff and the public, and provide a focus for members of the organization;
- Promoted cohesiveness by conjuring up the image of people coming together from different arenas to work together; and
- Was clear and would inform and direct decision making and DOC policy.



Sexual Assault in Anchorage

Anchorage, and Alaska statewide, has the regrettable distinction of having one of the highest incidences of forcible rapes and sexual assaults. In 2002, the state of Alaska had the highest rate of reported forcible rape among the 50 states (79.4 per 100,000) and Anchorage had the second highest rate of reported forcible rape among metropolitan statistical areas in the U.S. (95.0 per 100,000). In 2002, the rates of reported forcible rape were 141 percent higher in Alaska and 188 percent higher in Anchorage than in the U.S.

Some findings from this study include the following:

- Reported sexual assaults and rapes occur mostly on the weekends from 10 PM to 6 AM in Downtown, Fairview, Spenard, Mountain View, and Northeast;
- For 2003, the highest victimization rates are for 15-to-19-year-olds while the number of victims age 14 and under increased by 92 % from 2000 to 2003;
- In 2003, 67.3 % of victims are assaulted by non-strangers, an increase of 30% from 2001;
- 59.6 percent of known assault locations are private residences; and
- Alcohol use is very frequent among both suspects (73.7%) and victims (65.3%).

However, a positive note is that since publication of the Justice Center's reports, the most recent UCR statistics show that the number of forcible rapes reported in Anchorage has been declining. More specifically, the number of forcible rapes reported in Anchorage declined by 14.8% from 2004 to 2005 (from 263 reported forcible rapes to 224).

Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assaults in Anchorage, Alaska: 2002/2003 Update, and the original report, *Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assaults in Anchorage, Alaska*, may be read in their entirety at: <http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu>.

Work Group Volunteers

To all DOC employees who signed up for the various work groups during the April Probation/Parole Officers (PO) Training - Thank You! The enthusiastic response was a demonstration of the commitment Alaska's POs have to their jobs and to the safety of their communities. A few of the work groups have already started gearing up and people have been contacted. The one drawback to your enthusiasm is that the response to some of the groups outweighed the need. Have no fear, if you were not contacted for a specific work group, your talents will be utilized throughout the process. If you missed the opportunity to sign up at the April training and would still like to, please contact your supervisor to express your interest.

Looking to the Future

October 16 - 18, 2006

Alaska Child Maltreatment Conference, Hilton Hotel, Anchorage

October 23 - 27, 2006

Polygraph examinations

July 1, 2007

Statewide implementation of the new sex offender management program for all Alaska sex offenders.

Please contact Harriet Harris if you would like DOC to give a presentation to your organization or agency.

**Questions or comments? Please contact us at: harriet_harris@correct.state.ak.us
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