Community Notification: The Importance of Individualized Sex Offender Assessment

Sheri J. Flynn, MS, LSW & J. Michael Wood, Ph.D.
Arkansas Process

- Registration requires assessment by the Sex Offender Community Notification Assessment Program (SOCNA).
- Leads the nation in approach to sex offender assessment as recommended by the federal government and professional organizations.

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SOCNA is:

- Part of the Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC).
- Overseen by nine member governor appointed Sex Offender Assessment Committee (SOAC).
- Assesses ALL registered sex offenders.
- Assigns Community Notification Levels 1–4.
What Is the Purpose of Community Notification?

- SOSRA strives to provide accurate and detailed information to local law enforcement officers, who conduct CN and supervise offenders in their communities.

- Our hope is to help target limited resources toward those who most need them.
Over the years, SOCNA assessments have been used in additional ways including:

- DHS/CACD investigations & custody proceedings.
- Prosecutors – New sex offense and failure to register prosecutions.
- Prosecutors, Defense Attorneys and Court – Termination of registration hearings in circuit court.
- Treatment providers (ADC & Community)
- Arkansas Parole Board
- ACC– Level 3 & 4 Parolees
Recidivism rates for sex offenders in general are not any higher than other criminal offenses.

Certain subgroups of sex offenders re-offend at higher rates.

We need to know what kind of offender we are assessing.

Treating low risk offenders with high levels of intervention makes them worse and wastes resources.

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SOCNA Numbers

- Began assessing offenders in the fall of 1999.
- Developed to provide expertise in assessment and uniformity across the state.
- Through July 21, 2015, SOCNA has conducted 13,264 assessments.

Level 1–4 Sept. 1999–December 2014

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Why have individualized assessment & rank offenders?

- Not all sex offenders reoffend
- Sex offenders present varying levels of risk
- Some sex offenders are particularly dangerous

- Allows us to better monitor and conserve resources
- High Risk = High Supervision / Treatment Intensity
- Low Risk = Lower Supervision / intensity of services

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What Is A Sex Offender?
Examples of Registrants in Arkansas

- Sexual contact with children
- Forced rape with teens/adults
- “Consensual” sex between 18/19-year-olds and 15-year-olds (Statutory offenders)
- Flashers, peepers
- Giving HIV
- Stalkers
- Failure to protect
- Child Pornographers / Internet Stalkers
- Bestiality
- False Imprisonment
- Unable to consent
  - Teachers, inmates, MR

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**SEX OFFENDER FACT SHEET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offender Name: Vivian Ward</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADC#: 999999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliases: “Harry”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security #: 999-99-9999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingerprint Code/Class: XXXXOOXXOOXXOOXXOOXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver’s License #: 9999999999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Of Birth: 9-99-9988**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height: 5'10&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color: Auburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scars, Marks, or Tattoos: 6&quot; Scar/Chest; Tattoo: Eagle/R. Arm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of DNA Sample: 11-6-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Date: 1-6-03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Photo Date:** 12-06-02
**State Police ID #:** 9999999
**CSN #:** 9999999

**Anticipated Legal Address:** Rt. 6, Box 56; No Where, AR 10000
**Date Last Verified (ACIC):** 6-23-03

**Temporary Address (if applicable):** ADC Cummins Unit

**Probation/Parole Office:** NA (Will have City, State and Phone Number)

**Place of Employment:** NA (Will list employer’s name, City and State)

**Description of Crime:** This offender was convicted of Sexual Abuse-First Degree on 2-3-98. This offense involved the offender engaging in sexual contact with a 14 year-old female.

**Criminal History – Sexual/Violence:** Rape; Assault. Contact ACIC for additional criminal history.

**Victim Preferences:** Victim was an adolescent female.

**Community Notification Level:** 3

**Notification for this offender may need to increase, if the offender engages in any of the following:**
- Drug or alcohol use
- Failing to maintain employment; Unstructured free time
- Failing to maintain a stable residence
- Having access to the Internet
- Failing to comply with state registration laws and supervision
- Failing to complete sex offender treatment
- Associating with felons or others known to engage in criminal activity

**Treatment History:** Offender reports substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and sex offender treatment.

*Additional information may be obtained from the Arkansas Department of Correction
Sex Offender Screening and Risk Assessment Program
**Contact ACIC/NCIC for additional Social Security Numbers and Dates of Birth**

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An Assessment May Include

- Review of historical data
- Interview with the offender
- Truth Verification (Polygraph/CVSA)
- Appropriate Actuarial Instruments
- Psychological testing, as deemed necessary
Sex offender risk assessment

- Offender age
- Offender’s lack of relationship history
- History of violence
- Number of sex offense charges/convictions
- Unrelated victims
- Stranger victims
- Male victims
- Overall criminal history
- Convictions for paraphilic “hands-off” offenses
Benefits of individualized assessment?

- Community being notified of problematic offenders is the obvious

- Offender
  - Being more open with partners
  - Open with employers
  - Getting in/staying in treatment
  - Better chances of successful re-entry for lower risk offenders
  - Knows he is being monitored

- Law enforcement:
  - Has a ready database for investigating new crimes

- Prevention?
  - Dialogue about sex crimes/community education

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There is No One Solution

- Electronic Monitoring will not stop offending by predatory pedophiles. (and very expensive)

- Residency restrictions are not likely to stop the majority of sex offenses, as they are committed by people victims know and often love.

- Perhaps child safety zones are better?

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Sex Offender Management Is The Goal

Survivors & Victim Advocates

ADC

ACC

LLE

SOCNA

Sex Offender

Court

APB

Treatment

ACIC

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