

► Overview

Approximately 150,000 adult sex offenders are currently incarcerated in state and federal prisons throughout the United States, representing between 10% and 30% of prison populations in some states (see, e.g., Bynum, Huebner, & Burgess-Proctor, 2002; Greenfeld, 1997; Harrison & Beck, 2006a). During the past decade, there has been an 80% increase in the number of sex offenders in the nation's prisons (Beck & Gilliard, 1995; Harrison & Beck, 2006b). And while many sex offenders are entering prisons each year, large numbers are also being released; between 10,000 and 20,000 return to communities each year (CSOM, 2007).

Yet in a recent national analysis of release and reincarceration trends with sex offenders, it was revealed that well over 30% of released sex offenders returned to prison within three years (Langan, Schmitt, & Durose, 2003). However, the overwhelming majority of these returns to prison were not because of new sex crimes. Only 5.1% had been rearrested – and only 3.5% were reconvicted – of a new sex offense. Most of the sex offenders were sent back to prison for technical violations or non-sex crimes (Langan et al., 2003). Nonetheless, the high rates of reincarceration, regardless of reason, indicate that successful reentry for sex offenders is a significant challenge.

Similarly, the number of juvenile sex offenders entering juvenile facilities or residential settings has risen dramatically, with recent statis-

tics indicating that during the past decade, there was roughly a 30% increase in the number of these youth in justice-related placements (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). This trend is particularly noteworthy, given that the number of non-sex offending youth placed in juvenile facilities has actually decreased (Sickmund, 2006; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). As is the case with adult sex offenders, because more juvenile sex offenders are entering facilities, greater numbers will be returning to the community in the coming years.

A number of important issues and challenges make the successful transition and community reintegration of adult and juvenile sex offenders particularly difficult. They include, but are not limited to, the following (see, e.g., Bumby, Talbot, & Carter, in press; Levenson & Cotter, 2005a, 2005b; Tewksbury, 2005):

- Negative public sentiment about sex offenders;
- Myths and misperceptions about adult and juvenile sex offenders and the victims of these offenses;
- Highly publicized cases involving sex crimes;
- Limited housing and placement options; and
- Tighter residency restrictions specific to sex offenders.

With the heightened national focus on promoting successful reentry in recent years, promising strategies, informed by contemporary correctional and juvenile justice research with “general” offenders, have begun to emerge

(see, e.g., Altschuler & Armstrong, 2001; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Many of these broader strategies are applicable to reentry efforts with sex offenders when tailored to address the challenges unique to this specialized population (see Bumby et al., in press; CSOM, 2007).

When considering how to promote the successful return of adult and juvenile sex offenders to communities, jurisdictions should explore the extent to which agencies and organizations have begun to:

- Adopt an “in to out” philosophy of adult and juvenile sex offender management;
- Use early and ongoing assessments to begin guiding reentry;
- Invest in evidence-based strategies and other key services within facilities to support reentry;
- Enhance reentry outcomes through informed release decisionmaking;
- Ensure comprehensiveness in the transition phase;
- Plan for community supervision prior to release; and
- Educate and involve the public as a means of reducing barriers common to sex offender reentry.

► *Adopt an “In to Out” Philosophy of Adult and Juvenile Sex Offender Management*

Those who have a role in adult and juvenile sex offender management generally possess a shared goal that drives their efforts and transcends the physical boundaries of their respective locations in the system (i.e., “inside” or “outside” of facilities); this goal is to enhance community safety. In some jurisdictions, however, practitioners within facilities and those in the community work toward this goal independently, and sometimes without consideration of one another. Stated differently, correctional and juvenile justice agencies and their staff members may see their responsibilities with sex offender management as relevant only within the walls of the facility and independent of what ultimately occurs when sex offenders return to the community. Conversely, community-based agencies and practitioners may consider their roles in sex offender management as relevant only when sex offenders enter the community. This “in or out” philosophy and practice (in which inter- and intra-agency collaboration tends to be notably absent) often results in fragmented, inefficient, and ineffective approaches to sex offender reentry.

It is, therefore, critical that all stakeholders, whether facility- or community-based, recognize their respective roles as part of a seamless “in to out” process that works toward a common goal – successful reentry as means of enhancing community safety. Operationalizing such an approach requires correctional and juvenile justice administrators to establish complementary policies that:

- Prioritize reentry as a key agency mission;
- Articulate the roles and responsibilities of staff across agencies through the lens of successful reentry; and

THOSE WHO HAVE A ROLE IN ADULT AND JUVENILE SEX OFFENDER MANAGEMENT POSSESS A SHARED GOAL – COMMUNITY SAFETY.