

Jurisdictions across the country recognize clearly that the effective management of sex offenders requires more than supervision and treatment. Indeed, the effective management of sex offenders demands the thoughtful integration of these and other management components and, perhaps as importantly, ongoing collaboration among those who are responsible for carrying out these activities.

The Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM) developed the *Comprehensive Assessment Protocol: A Systemwide Review of Adult and Juvenile Sex Offender Management Strategies (CAP)* to assist jurisdictions in the enhancement of their management approaches with this offender population. The CAP is a tool that, when used as designed, will guide its users through a deliberate and highly collaborative information-gathering and analysis process. It will identify with a high degree of specificity the strengths of a jurisdiction's sex offender management approach and the steps that can be taken to further enhance and strengthen its system.

► Introduction

The CAP: What it Is

The CAP is a tool designed to assist jurisdictions of all types and sizes – urban or rural, state, regional, county or tribal– to examine and improve their existing approaches to adult and juvenile sex offender management. The CAP is grounded in the theory that the complex nature of sex offending behavior and its management requires an informed, integrated, and comprehensive justice system response. The CAP is designed to assist jurisdictions who are committed to analyzing their sex offender management policies and practices thoroughly and using the data and information they collect through this analysis to identify and evaluate the strengths and gaps in their work with sex offender management across their criminal and juvenile justice systems, prioritize their identified need areas, and develop specific strategies to address those needs.

Populations Addressed by the CAP

The CAP addresses the effective management of adjudicated adult and juvenile male sex offenders. It is beyond the scope of this document to address adequately issues and challenges associated with female sex offenders, children with sexual behavior problems, and other special populations.¹

It should be noted that the term “juvenile sex offender” is used throughout this document for readability and economy of presentation to refer to youth who have been adjudicated for committing a sex offense. However, because data suggests that juvenile sex offenders are more amenable to changing their behavior, or desisting from criminal activity before becoming adults, it is important to be wary of the effects of labeling these youth as sex offenders.

The CAP as One Component of a Systemwide Assessment

The CAP is only one step in a much larger results-driven policy planning and implementation process outlined in the CAP’s companion document, *Enhancing the Management of Adult and Juvenile Sex Offenders: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners*². Users should be sure to address each of the following steps, as outlined in the Handbook, to take full advantage of the CAP:

- Establishing a multi-disciplinary collaborative team;
- Developing a vision for the future, and a mission for the team;
- Understanding current policy and practice, particularly in the context of a well-grounded understanding of the field of sex offender management;
- Assessing current policy and practice, and identifying targets for enhancement;
- Developing goals and objectives for carrying out change strategies; and
- Implementing and monitoring performance outcomes.

The *Handbook* provides information, guidance, and working tools to carry out each of these important steps, with one exception: the *Handbook* refers its users to this document, the CAP, for a summary of the most up-to-date literature and emerging practice in the field, and to conduct a jurisdiction-specific policy and practice analysis.

Prior to conducting the CAP, multi-disciplinary, collaborative teams are strongly urged to carry out the system analysis steps described in the Handbook. These pieces of work will lay a critical foundation for the work that the team will undertake in the CAP process and will result in:

- An analysis of the jurisdiction’s sex offender population that will provide important information about the volume of cases flowing through the criminal and/or juvenile justice system and the level of risk and criminogenic needs posed by the population.
- An inventory of the resources available to both offenders and victims of sexual assault, enabling the jurisdiction to identify the “match” between the needs of the population and the interventions available to service them.
- A “system map” describing the movement of cases through the criminal/juvenile justice system from arrest through post-release supervision. This map will promote a common understanding among team members about how the system operates, help to identify opportunities for efficient and increased communication, and facilitate future conversations about how best to integrate change strategies into the existing system.

The CAP: What it is Not

The CAP provides teams with a method to assess the strengths of their policies and practices against the most contemporary research and emerging practice in the field. In this way it is a working tool for self-assessment purposes. It has not been developed for use as an audit, or a method to find fault with the approach a particular jurisdiction is using. The CAP was not developed to provide protection from legal challenges. Neither was the CAP conceived of as a quick and easy assessment of one particular aspect of sex offender management. Rather, it is one part of a long-term strategic planning process that will help jurisdictions make the most informed and data-driven decisions about how to enhance public safety and prevent further victimization by improving their sex offender management strategies.

► *The Organization of the CAP*

The CAP describes five fundamental principles that represent the underpinnings of a “Comprehensive Approach” to adult and juvenile sex offender management. These principles are:

- Specialized knowledge and training;
- A victim-centered approach;
- Collaboration;
- Public education; and
- Monitoring and evaluation.

The Comprehensive Approach also highlights six key substantive areas of practice – or core components of a comprehensive sex offender management system. The CAP is organized around these core components:

- Investigation, Prosecution, and Disposition;
- Assessment;
- Supervision;
- Treatment;
- Reentry; and
- Registration and Community Notification.

In each section that pertains to these components, users will find:

- A narrative summary of the empirical research, other professional literature, and/or emerging practice relevant to adult and juvenile sex offender management. This information is provided as a foundation for teams conducting the CAP, to assure a common, well-grounded knowledge base among all members.
- A series of questions designed to assist jurisdictions to identify and understand their current policies and practices within each of the core components of sex offender management. These questions are separated into adult and juvenile categories, when applicable. The questions address both policy and practice issues, and ask teams to identify how commonly each set of practices is implemented in their jurisdiction (always or yes/typically/generally not/never or no). In some questions, only a “yes” or “no” response is appropriate, and “typically” or “generally not” answer options are not offered in these instances. Answers will point teams to those areas in which sex offender management practices are most – and least – consistent with the contemporary literature, and in turn, what their jurisdiction must address in order to improve its own practices.
- An extensive list of references, so that readers can seek additional information on sex offender management related topics.

► *Conducting the CAP*

Using the CAP as a Tool for Statewide, Regional, or Local Teams

The CAP was designed to meet the needs of teams of stakeholders examining sex offender management policy and practice at the state, regional, and/or local levels. The literature and policy and practice summaries — as well as the questions that follow these summaries — are germane to all sex offender management teams, regardless of size and scope. What may differ, however, is the composition of the teams, the approach teams will take in answering the questions, and the intended targets for change.

- **Local teams** are formed to assess and enhance policy and practice in a single jurisdiction (e.g., tribal jurisdiction, city, county).
- **Regional teams** are formed to assess and enhance policy and practice regionally. This approach is generally adopted by geographic regions that work closely together as a matter of course, share resources, and/or whose personnel (e.g., probation/parole officers, judges, prosecutors, treatment providers) work with more than one jurisdiction.
- **Statewide teams** are formed to assess and enhance policy and practice across an entire state. Given the extensiveness of the CAP (in terms of the range and depth of the substantive areas it addresses), conducting the CAP process statewide may pose both logistical and conceptual challenges. Following a careful review of the content of

the CAP, statewide teams should consider the approach that will best meet their needs. This might include: choosing to conduct the CAP in a limited number of ‘pilot’ jurisdictions that reflect the state’s geographic and population diversity, examining one offender population group (adults or juveniles) rather than both, or identifying methods to conduct the CAP across the entire state.

The *Handbook* provides guidance both on establishing teams to undertake this policy and practice work, as well as case studies reflecting the approaches three state, regional, and local jurisdictions have taken to this work.³

Preparatory Work

Establishing a Team

If a jurisdiction does not already have one in place, establishing a multidisciplinary team of professionals to conduct the CAP should be its first order of business. Team composition and early work activities of the team are described in depth in the *Handbook*. Teams should include individuals who will be responsible for leading and facilitating the group, coordinating the collection of data, and maintaining an accurate record of the group’s work.

Ensuring Adequate Leadership, Staff Support, and Team Commitment

As described above, the CAP will guide teams through the assessment of current sex offender management practices, one of the most challenging steps in a thoughtful planning and implementation process. In addition to establishing a team and completing the steps

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described in the *Handbook*, jurisdictions will also need to ensure that teams have:

- *Inspired leadership.* Teams will need to enlist a leader with the power, authority, and inspiration to convene the necessary participants and keep them involved, and to encourage other leaders to support the involvement of their agencies and staff. This individual should also have the skills necessary to lead people through collaborative team work sessions.
- *Sufficient staff resources.* Support staff must either be assigned from existing staff resources, or should be written into any proposals to support this assessment process (e.g., arranging meetings, facilitating work sessions, keeping accurate meeting records, collecting and analyzing data, etc.).
- *Commitment.* Participants will need to be prepared to attend and participate actively in meetings, and to seek out and contribute data and information.

Teams should understand from the outset that this process is both time consuming and labor intensive. Even with sufficient staff support, participants should be prepared for periods of intense involvement in data collection and analysis, and frequent committee and team meetings. The sharing of information and examination of gaps across agencies may demand significant meeting time, but will produce a wealth of information to which team members would likely otherwise not have had access.

Getting Started

Assuming that a team is in place and ready to engage in the policy and practice analysis process, these steps should be initiated to begin the work:

- *Review the team's vision, mission, and goals.* Without a vision for the outcome of the team's work and a roadmap to get there, team members may become frustrated or the work unfocused. Teams should ensure that members have a common focus and a shared commitment to the outcome.
- *Revisit the team's membership.* Teams should include all of the policymakers whose agencies affect or are affected by the management of sex offenders and can support and lead policy change; teams should also consider securing the participation of knowledgeable line staff who can answer questions about how policy is put into everyday practice.
- *Ensure that the team has the appropriate leadership and coordination in place to manage the work.* Teams should form a steering committee and/or core group of individuals to oversee the work of each subcommittee, when subcommittees are used for information collection and analysis.
- *Establish a results-driven structure.* The CAP will require adequate staff support and an efficient information collection and analysis system. Make sure that the team has a plan in place for how to ensure that the work can be completed.
 - *Consider establishing subcommittees to conduct the information collection portion of the CAP.* Some jurisdictions have completed the entire process together, using their regular meetings to identify data sources and answer questions. Most jurisdictions, however, have organized their subcommittees around the CAP sections (typically a subcommittee for each of the six substantive areas); others have created subcommittees around some of the basic principles (such as a victim-centered approach and public education). Some have decided to limit subcommittee membership to core team

members, while others have drawn on additional stakeholders (external to the team) to conduct the subcommittee work. How teams organize themselves will depend on the time and personnel available, and the preferred work style and culture of team members. The important issue is to ensure that information is collected and analyzed systematically, and is shared with the entire team.

- *Ensure that the work is coordinated and managed effectively.* Teams should enlist a person (the team’s leader and/or coordinator usually fulfills this role) or small group of people to ensure that questions in each component are being answered and that information is being shared across subcommittees.
- *Skim the CAP in its entirety.* Teams should get an idea of the types of questions that are asked, so that they are adequately positioned to start the work.

Subcommittee Work

When each individual subcommittee (or the entire team, if that is the method chosen) is ready to begin work on their sections of the CAP, consider the following suggestions:

- *Elect one person to be the “chair” of each subcommittee.* This person should be responsible for calling their subcommittee together, facilitating their meetings, keeping the smaller group on task, and sharing information with the larger group to ensure that the whole team is informed about their section’s work.
- *Task each member of the subcommittee with becoming expert in their core component area(s).* Then, create the expectation that the subcommittee will accept as part of its role to educate the full team members on

their topic. In the end, all members of the team will ideally be knowledgeable about each component of sex offender management.

- *Create mixed discipline subcommittees.* For example, do not assign only those team members who are involved in supervision to the Supervision subcommittee. Doing otherwise will provide a unique opportunity for cross-disciplinary learning, and will assure that there are checks and balances in the group’s information collection and analysis process.
- *Members of each subcommittee should review the relevant section of the CAP in its entirety, including the narratives and the questions, prior to their first meeting.* At the first meeting, subcommittee members should plan to review each question to determine what information will need to be collected in order to answer the question, where it can be found, and who can provide access to it. The point of the first meeting should not be to answer the questions, but to develop a strategy for answering the questions and developing a detailed workplan and timeline that can be shared with the entire team.

Subcommittees should continue to meet through the information collection and analysis process to ensure that the work is being carried out as planned, data is recorded in a useful manner, and difficulties with the information collection and analysis process are addressed early.

At the conclusion of the subcommittee’s work, the committee should be prepared to present its findings and recommendations to the entire team.

If a team chooses to work together on all of the component sections rather than working in subcommittees, a workplan and timeline for each section should be developed. Dividing the work among individual group members and

encouraging them to answer the questions independently – without at least processing them with the team – is not recommended. Doing so will provide only one person’s perspective, and is unlikely to give an accurate or comprehensive picture of policy and practice across the jurisdiction.

Guidance for Team Members about Answering the CAP Questions

It is important to consider each question as an opportunity to better understand the jurisdiction’s current sex offender management system, not as a task to accomplish quickly. After all, an ill-informed action plan is unlikely to change policies and practices in a way that will enhance public safety. The quality of the information collected will have tremendous bearing on the final work product of the team.

The information gathering process should be used as an opportunity to talk to others outside of the team structure, to educate them on the vision, mission, and goals of the policy team, and to learn their perspectives on the strengths and gaps in the current management approach. Doing so is likely to elicit valuable information that will facilitate the team’s analysis process, and to engender long-term support for the team’s work.

The following additional guidance is offered:

- *Decide how best to answer the questions in the CAP based upon the scope of the effort.* Obviously, attempting to answer the CAP questions for every county in a state can be daunting, particularly if practice varies widely from county to county. Some states have created surveys based on the CAP questions that have been sent to each coun-

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ty to answer (and those answers have been tabulated into a cohesive document about statewide practice); others have sampled a variety of representative jurisdictions in order to answer the questions. Either approach is viable, depending upon what it is the state hopes to learn or change as a result of the assessment process.

- *Do not rely solely on the expertise of subcommittee members to answer the questions.* If needed, subcommittees should feel free to call upon practitioners outside of the group to answer the CAP questions. Additionally, committees should seek concrete evidence to support the response to each question (e.g., reviewing completed PSI reports to evaluate their content, or reading the sex offender treatment provider’s manual to understand the treatment philosophy and approach to delivery of services).
- *Review of documents, followed by discussions with line staff, followed by observation, will prove to be the most reliable source of information.* A review of law enforcement’s written policies and procedures for community notification, followed by discussions with law enforcement personnel regarding how the notification process is carried out, followed by observation of one or more actual notifications (e.g., attending a community meeting, accompanying officers on a door-to-door notification) will provide additional corroboration to one person’s anecdotal experience. Whenever possible, documents that support the team’s findings should be gathered and multiple forms of

information collection (document reviews, interviews or focus groups, and observation) will net the best results.

- *Expect variability in practice.* It is not unusual to find that there is lack of uniformity within a jurisdiction with some practitioners or agencies doing things one way, and others doing it completely differently. With this kind of information, the CAP can help teams to achieve increased consistency in practice. Teams should decide together how to score items in which variability in practice exists.
- *In those cases where numerous individuals are involved in carrying out a particular function, committees might consider convening a focus group to understand the variety of approaches in use.* For example, it might be helpful to identify those prosecutors handling sex offense cases and interview them together in a focus group format to understand their management of these cases, rather than relying on the experience of one treatment provider or individually interviewing a number of treatment providers. This approach can be particularly helpful when conducting the CAP on a regional or statewide basis.
- *Team members should learn more about the basis for the policies currently in operation.* Subcommittee members should seek out the chief policy maker(s) in each substantive area in an effort to better understand the basis for policies (whether written or informal) and their operationalization.

As noted previously, team members should work closely together to answer the questions posed in the CAP. Scores should be derived as a result of a collaborative decisionmaking process among team members. The score ascribed to any particular item is much less important than the process the team uses to determine the score. Making a distinction between ‘typically’ and ‘generally not’ for any given question, for example, is not as important as the resulting conversation about critical system gaps and needs.

► **Processing the Findings of the CAP**

The team’s assessment of current sex offender management policy and practice will result in a large body of data and information about their system. During the process, teams will have examined their current policies and practices, case flow process, and offender population and resources. After having carefully considered this data and information, subcommittees (or the team as a whole) should document and share with one another their learnings. At this stage in the process, teams often schedule a “retreat” in order to allow sufficient time to synthesize all that they have learned together as a group, discuss strengths, identify priority gaps, and establish implementation priorities. If subcommittees have been working on the CAP components, they should present their findings to the full team in a structured and organized fashion.

The team will need to consider how these factors may influence their work on their needs and challenges, and determine the most appropriate order in which to address their needs and challenges.

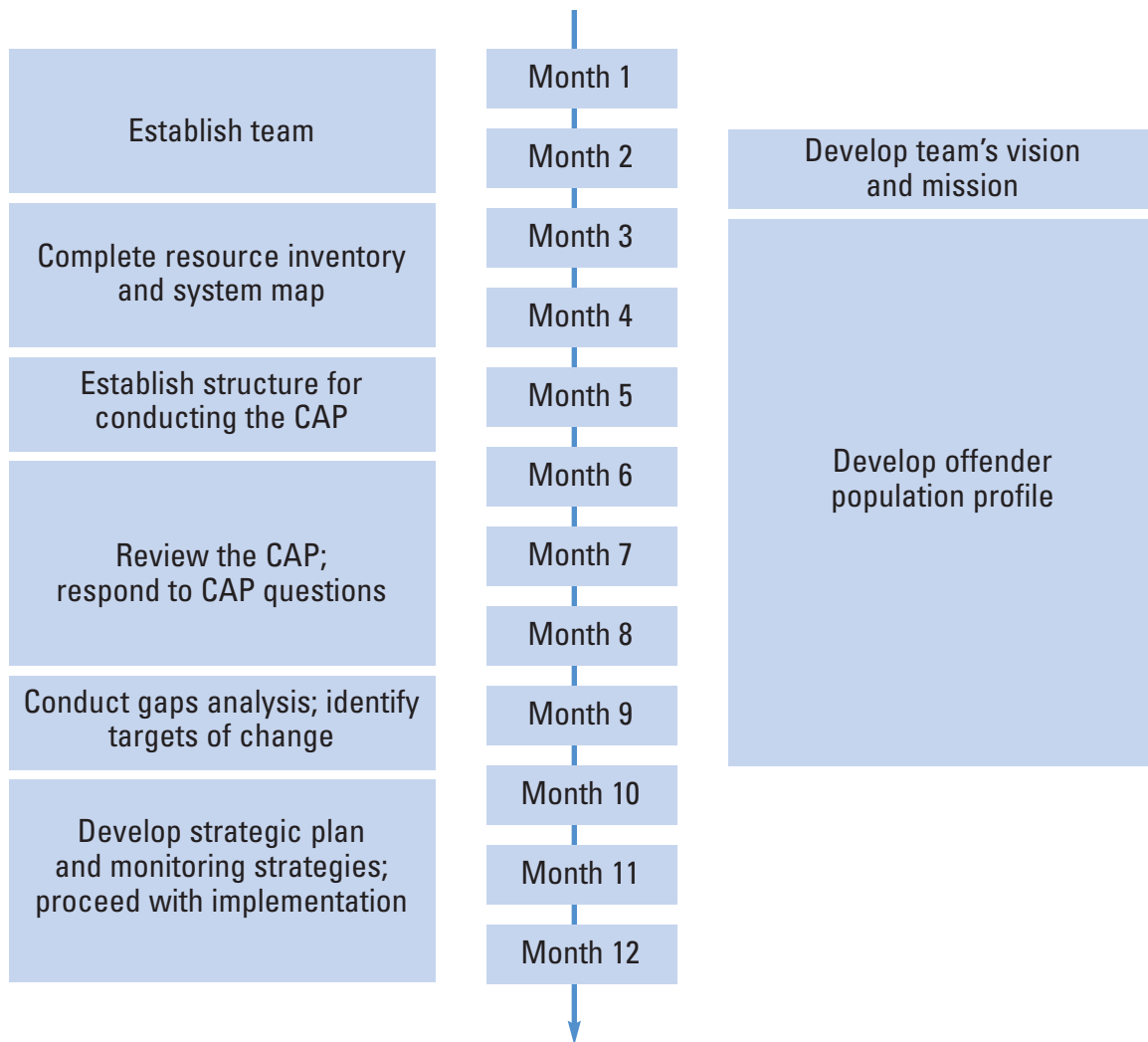
In addition, the subcommittees work worked on the various sections of the CAP will have iden-

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tified a variety of noteworthy strengths and assets related to how the jurisdiction manages sex offenders. Therefore, another important task for the larger team will be to examine how these strengths can be further enhanced, and how they may be utilized to address the identified needs and challenges. For example, if a jurisdiction identifies the presence of well-trained, specialized treatment providers as a strength, and a lack of specialized training among probation and parole staff as a high priority gap, it is possible that the clinicians may be very helpful training resources for supervision officers.

► *Implementation and Monitoring*

A critical activity that must occur prior to implementation is the translation of the team's processing of the CAP findings into a comprehensive strategic plan. This plan should include the specific activities that will be undertaken to address the team's high priority needs and challenges, and the ways in which team members will capitalize on the strengths that have been identified. Many teams have found it to be very helpful to assign members to specific tasks and to establish deadlines for their completion. This promotes shared ownership over



the implementation process and ensures that policy and practice changes will be made in a timely manner. Please see the *Handbook* for additional guidance and information regarding the development of a strategic plan.

In addition to creating and implementing a thorough, time-specific plan of action with specific team member assignments, it is necessary for the team to forge strategies to assess over time the impact of the changes that are made.

Ideally, both process and outcome evaluations are conducted so that the team is able to demonstrate the positive effects of their efforts and, in so doing, secure additional support and funding for management strategies that have been demonstrated to "work." For more information about developing a monitoring plan, please refer to the Handbook.

► *Timeline*

The timeline for completing this policy and practice analysis process varies between jurisdictions, depending upon the team's readiness, access to staff support and data, and other factors. The diagram on the previous page reflects an example of a timeline for completing a comprehensive assessment of a jurisdiction's sex offender management system, including conducting the CAP. Obviously, this timeline will be adjusted based on the particular jurisdiction's limitations (e.g., a statewide system assessment is likely to take longer than an assessment of a local system, or jurisdictions with automat-

ed data collection systems across all agencies are likely to be able to collect information more quickly).

► *Conclusion*

Virtually all of the jurisdictions that undertook this process as part of the CAP pilot found that they learned more about their system than they ever expected possible. As a result, they each implemented strategies that promised to achieve their ultimate outcome: reducing victimization in their communities. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of these teams remain in place today. Where they once came together as an assemblage of individuals involved in some way in the management of sex offenders, or united for a short time to take on a specific task, they became, over time, the local experts on the research in this field, and on the practices within their jurisdictions. Almost universally, these teams have come to envision a much larger role for themselves than simply conducting an assessment and implementing a few changes. Instead, they have adopted a much broader mission: to oversee the system that manages this offender population, and to do what they can to assure no more victims.

► *Contact Us*

Please contact askcsom@csom.org with any questions about how to use the CAP to effect change in your jurisdiction.

- ¹ See the *Additional Resources* section of this document for a reference list that addresses these offender populations.
- ² See the *Handbook* for specific questions and tasks related to each step; this document can be downloaded from <http://www.csom.org/pubs/managehandbook.pdf>.
- ³ Appendix 4 of the *Handbook* includes three case studies of jurisdictions who participated in the pilot test version of the CAP from 2003-2005. The case studies describe the work of these local, regional, and statewide teams in conducting the CAP.