

# **EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABOUT A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF SEX OFFENDERS IN THE COMMUNITY:**

## A Training Curriculum

### Introduction

#### **Background**

The material contained on this CD-ROM (or on the web site)—a Training Curriculum on *Educating the Community About Sexual Assault and About the Management of Sex Offenders in the Community*—is one of a number of curricula on sex offender management issues developed by the Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM). CSOM is managed by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice, in collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections, the State Justice Institute, and the American Probation and Parole Association. The project is administered through a cooperative agreement between OJP and the Center for Effective Public Policy.

Since its inception, CSOM has designed and presented training sessions at national conferences and at local and regional training events. It has become clear, however, that the demand for training can be met only partially by these events. There is also a great interest in curriculum materials that can be used by probation and parole agencies, law enforcement agencies, training coalitions, sex offender treatment networks, sexual assault coalitions, and related organizations to disseminate more widely the knowledge that is developing in the field regarding sexual assault and sex offender management.

#### **Use of This Curriculum**

Exchanges between the community and public agencies responsible for management of sex offenders in the community are becoming increasingly frequent for many reasons.

- ⇒ Now that every state has some form of Megan's Law requiring community notification of one type or another, there are many occasions where public agencies (police, prosecutors, corrections agencies, etc.) are required to provide information about individual sex offenders. They do this through a variety of means—door-to-door canvassing, community meetings, the development and distribution of printed notices, and other methods. (See *Community Notification and Education*, a policy and practice brief published by the Center for Sex Offender Management and included in its entirety as a reference document among the participant materials for this curriculum. This document provides an overview of the practices being employed nationwide to notify communities of the presence of sex offenders in their midst, along with some of the issues that arise as a result of these practices.)

- ⇒ As more comprehensive approaches to the management of sex offenders who are in the community come into practice, community members, victims, offenders' families, and others are being invited to become partners in the management approach.
- ⇒ As knowledge about the extensive occurrence of sexual assault becomes more widespread, agencies are beginning to recognize that community notification meetings and interactions with individual community members become opportunities to engage in prevention activities, to connect sexual assault victims with services, and, generally, to advance a community's ability to understand and protect itself from sexual assault and its trauma.

Of course, opportunities to interact with communities on this topic are highly individualized. They require extraordinary sensitivity to the particular context and the needs of individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities. As such, a great deal of care must be taken in planning any community meeting. In order to accommodate the need to tailor each event, this curriculum is designed as a "menu" of materials from which users may select some items and not others. This will allow users to customize events to their particular needs. The materials within this curriculum may be used:

- ⇒ To plan a meeting with a neighborhood watch group, or a group interested generally in community safety issues;
- ⇒ To plan a meeting to notify the community regarding an individual sex offender's presence in a particular neighborhood;
- ⇒ To educate a community and/or other stakeholders proactively regarding sexual violence and sex offender management programs; or
- ⇒ To help structure a meeting specifically designed to encourage community members to support and become involved in a comprehensive sex offender management program.

## **Goals of the Curriculum**

This curriculum has been developed to assist users to plan and execute a meeting or meetings with members of the community that is/are designed to achieve one or more of the following goals.

1. To assist community members to better protect themselves and their families against sexual assault by:
  - ⇒ Dispelling some of the common myths regarding sex offenders and their victims with facts based on research and professional experience;
  - ⇒ Dispelling unwarranted fears with sound information and self-protection strategies; and
  - ⇒ Familiarizing citizens with the resources available in their community to assist in sexual assault prevention and provide services to the victims of sexual assault.

2. To fulfill the local legal requirements for notifying communities about the presence of offenders convicted of certain sexual offenses and to respond to community members' questions about their rights and responsibilities with respect to this notification.
3. Where law enforcement and community supervision agencies and others have developed a specialized and comprehensive approach to sex offender management in the community, this curriculum may help community members to:
  - ⇒ Understand more clearly why some sex offenders are managed in our communities and the rationale for a specialized approach to sex offender management;
  - ⇒ Understand that the successful management of sex offenders in the community means the prevention of future victimization, which is in everyone's best interests; and
  - ⇒ Understand and support the particular approaches and methods being employed in their own community to manage this population of criminal offenders.
4. Where appropriate, to understand how community members can themselves be involved in sex offender management.

The curriculum is organized into four sections—each corresponding to one of the four goals listed above. Section 1 focuses on basic information on sexual assault, dispelling myths, addressing fears, suggesting self protection strategies, and providing information about where to obtain additional help. Section 2 provides an outline for a community notification. Section 3 provides information on sex offender management—informing citizens of what is being done to manage sex offenders safely in the community. Section 4 builds upon Section 3 by inviting citizens to consider how they can be part of a sex offender management strategy.

## **Organization**

Following is a preview of the content of each of the sections:

### **Section 1: What Community Members Need to Know about Sexual Assault and Sex Offenders**

This section provides basic information about the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault and attempts to replace some of the common myths about sexual assault with concise, research-based information. In the process it seeks to reduce individuals' fears about sexual assault and to equip them with information to help reduce the likelihood that they or their children will become victims of sexual assault.

### **Section 2: Conducting a Community Notification**

This section provides a basic agenda for a multi-disciplinary team to follow when conducting a community notification. It needs to be tailored by the inclusion of

information about local statutes and practices regarding notification. It also suggests topics that should be covered—including cautions about vigilantism and harassment of offenders—as context for the notification.

### Section 3: Managing Sex Offenders in the Community

This section provides information about the number of sex offenders who—despite tougher sentencing practices—are in the community, both on and off probation/parole supervision. Given this information, a rationale is developed for the need for a specialized approach to the supervision of sex offenders in the community. This section outlines emerging practices around the nation that are proving effective in the management of sex offenders.

### Section 4: The Role of the Community

This section outlines the ways in which community members can participate in a comprehensive approach to managing sex offenders in the community and in a broader effort to prevent sexual assault.

## Tailoring the Curriculum

*Adding local information.* The material in each section of this curriculum can be strengthened by the addition of locally assembled information. Section 1 will benefit from information on sexual assault statistics, specific definitions in state law, and how to access other local services and resources. You should assemble information about local resources for sexual assault prevention and for crisis intervention and advocacy. Be sure to contact local sexual assault programs, child advocacy centers, and the like so you can provide meeting participants with a handout or flyer that provides names, contact information, and the types of services that can be accessed in your community. In particular, you should be sure to provide the audience with local and statewide hotline numbers. Section 2 requires the integration of information on local notification laws and practices, along with specific information on the offender or offenders who are the subject of notification. Sections 3 and 4 are only useful, of course, if the agencies using the materials are seeking to better inform citizens about local practices regarding the management of sex offenders in the community, and are seeking their support and assistance. In either case, the materials will need to be tailored with local information to make them relevant and useful.

Whatever local information that you gather for the meeting should be prepared in handout form so that participants can take information away with them after the meeting.

*The time available for training.* Most community meetings are of limited duration—an hour or two. The curriculum is written to be delivered in a total of 2 hours and 20 minutes—55 minutes for Section 1, 30 minutes for Section 2, 30 minutes for Section 3, and 25 minutes for Section 4. However, particularly if the users are including all 4

sections in the meeting, each of the sections can be shortened by covering topics briefly and distributing the handout material provided in the curriculum to participants to take away with them. If materials are supplemented with contact information for local resources, participants can follow up later with questions. Alternatively, if users are planning a series of meeting on these topics, the sections can be lengthened with the addition of more time for discussion and questions, so that each section might be covered at a separate meeting on a different occasion.

*The number of participants.* Much of the curriculum can be delivered in lecture style, supplemented by exercises, and discussion. As such, it can be presented to large groups of several hundred participants or to audiences as small as ten. It is strongly recommended, however, that regardless of the number involved in training, provisions be made for questions and answers.

### **Special Considerations**

*An interdisciplinary team of trainers is essential.* We strongly recommend that this curriculum be delivered by an interdisciplinary team of trainers who are knowledgeable on issues of sexual assault, community efforts to manage sex offenders, and local resources available for prevention and victim advocacy. Even if the goal of your educational event is limited to basic education about sexual assault and prevention, community members will have a variety of concerns, questions, and needs that cut across various professions. Law enforcement, victim advocacy, probation/parole supervision, and sex offender treatment providers are all important members of such a training team.

Where you do have the luxury of more time, discussion sessions, exercises, and question and answer sessions are helpful; suggestions for these are included in the curriculum material. Having an interdisciplinary team present helps to answer questions and manage discussions on a whole range of topics.

*Ensuring support for victims of sexual assault who may be meeting participants.* Always assume that when you convene any type of community gathering on this topic, there will be those in the group who have been victims of sexual assault. This experience should be openly acknowledged by the trainers (“I know that some of you in this room may have experienced sexual assault yourselves, and the reason you are here is to try to prevent others from having that same experience”). Every effort should be made to validate the input of those who choose to speak out from that experience. In the event that the training triggers emotional responses, we suggest arrangements be made for someone to be present who is qualified to work with sexual assault victims and their loved ones. Ideally, this would be a victim advocate from a local sexual assault program, to allow for follow-up services, if needed.

*Planning and preparing for community meetings.* You and your fellow presenters or trainers will want to get together in advance of the meeting to agree on your goals for the meeting. You should agree on an agenda and who will be covering what

information. It is also an excellent idea to practice your agenda in advance, so that each presenter will hear the content of what the other presenters will be covering. This will facilitate the delivery of a single cohesive presentation, rather than the delivery of a series of mini-presentations. Planning ahead for room set-up, audio-visual needs, and adequate quantities of handout materials is also a great asset in conducting a productive meeting or training session.

*Being prepared for difficult questions.* Since this is a topic that can provoke difficult questions and strong emotions, anticipating the kinds of questions that may be received and how best to respond to these questions is advantageous. At the end of Section 1 you will find an example of the types of questions that typically arise at these meetings. You will, of course, want to anticipate your answers, being as specific as you can and as sensitive to local issues and concerns as possible. This list provides some suggested answers to questions as a place for you to start.

*Optimal timing and location for community meetings.* Schedule the meeting on an evening in the middle of the week (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday). A few days prior to the meeting, issue flyers to the neighborhood (or publish a notice in a local newspaper), inviting community members to attend the meeting and describe the meeting objectives. Arrange to convene the meeting in a location large enough to accommodate all community members, such as a school gymnasium or lecture hall, church, or town hall.

In most states, community notification is conducted prior to a sex offender's release into the community. Scheduling a community meeting in advance of the offender's impending release gives citizens both the time to prepare and an appropriate venue for them to ask questions, calm their fears, and dispel any myths about sex offenders and offending that they may have. It is imperative that citizens understand the purpose of these meetings as informational only and that offenders will be released regardless of community notification. Citizens should not be given the impression that these meetings can be used to deny an offender's release from prison, or to decide whether an offender has the right to reside in their community.

### **What You Will Find on This Disk (or on the Web Site)**

The following components of the curriculum are available for your use.

*Overview materials.* In addition to the *Introduction*, you will find a *User's Guide* that provides details on the structure of the training materials, tips on facilitating exercises and small group work, and an acknowledgements section, which identifies the individuals who have assisted in developing this curriculum.

*Materials by section.* Four sections of training materials are included. Within each section you will find:

⇒ Lecture content and teaching notes with suggestions for using the slides provided,

- a learning activity, and handout materials;
- ⇒ Slides that highlight the main points made during the lecture (versions of these slides can also be printed out to be distributed as additional participant materials); and
- ⇒ Participant materials, intended to be copied and distributed to participants for use during and after the training:
  - ⇒ *Learning Activity*. The major learning activity—aside from suggested discussion questions or question and answer periods—is a true/false test that participants are invited to take as a way to introduce some of the basic facts about sexual assault and to dispel some common myths.
  - ⇒ *Reference Materials and Other Handouts*. These documents are intended primarily as handouts. These provide safety tips, fact sheets, lists of resources, and other documents that are designed as “take-away” material for community members who might participate in a meeting covering these topics. These handouts should allow you to cover a wide range of topics quickly, providing people with information they can take home for review.

Many of these handouts have been provided, or adapted from materials of various organizations. These materials may be duplicated and distributed, but you are asked to follow any reprint policy indicated on the document.

*Evaluation instrument*. Also included in the overview materials is an evaluation instrument that you may find helpful in assessing the usefulness of the training to your participants. It can be duplicated and distributed to training participants for completion at the end of the training. We hope that you will use this instrument; we also ask that you make these completed instruments available to CSOM. In order to assist us in refining and improving future editions of this and other CSOM training curricula, please make copies of completed evaluations and mail them to:

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## **Other Resources for Trainers**

If you are preparing to conduct a session for community members and would like background reading to better prepare yourself for the event, the following materials may be of assistance.

For a list of information on collaborative models of managing sex offenders, consult the

following resources:

Center for Sex Offender Management (2000, January). *Community Supervision of the Sex Offender: An Overview of Current and Promising Practice*. Silver Spring, MD.

Center for Sex Offender Management (2000, October). *The Collaborative Approach to Sex Offender Management*. Silver Spring, MD.

Center for Sex Offender Management (2001, April). *Case Studies on the Center for Sex Offender Management's National Resource Sites, 2nd Edition, Revised*. Silver Spring, MD.

English, K. & Pullen, S. (1996). *Managing Adult Sex Offenders: A Containment Approach*. Lexington, KY: American Probation and Parole Association.

Maletzky, B. (1991). *Treating the Sexual Offender*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

For more information on sexual assault of children and adults, consult the following resources:

Center for Sex Offender Management (2000, August). *Myths and Facts about Sex Offenders*. Silver Spring, MD.

Center for Sex Offender Management (2002, March). *An Overview of Sex Offender Management*. Silver Spring, MD.

Hindman, J. (1989). *Just Before Dawn*. Ontario, OR: Alexandria Associates.

Kilpatrick, Edmunds, and Seymour (1992). *Rape In America: A Report To The Nation*. Arlington, VA: National Victim Center and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center. To order by phone, call (703) 276-2880.

Senate Committee on the Judiciary (1993). *The Response to Rape: Detours on the Road to Equal Justice* (S. Prt. 103-52). Washington, DC: 103<sup>rd</sup> U. S. Congress.

For more information on community notification, consult the following resources:

Adams, D. (1999). *Summary of State Sex Offender Registry Dissemination Procedures*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Center for Sex Offender Management (1999, October). *Sex Offender Registration: Policy Overview and Comprehensive Practices*. Silver Spring, MD.

Center for Sex Offender Management (2001, April). *Community Notification and Education*. Silver Spring, MD.

U.S. Department of Justice (1999, January 5). *Megan's Law; Final Guidelines for the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act, as Amended*. Federal Register 64 (2), 572-587.