

AN OVERVIEW OF SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT FOR A NON-CLINICAL AUDIENCE A Training Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Background

This curriculum—*An Overview of Sex Offender Treatment for a Non-Clinical Audience: A Training Curriculum*—is one of a number of curricula on sex offender management issues being developed by the Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM). The Center for Sex Offender Management is sponsored 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. CSOM is administered through a cooperative agreement between OJP and the Center for Effective Public Policy.

One of CSOM's original mandates was to provide training for probation and parole agencies and others who share responsibility for sex offender management to enhance their ability to more safely manage sex offenders who are supervised in the community. Since its inception in 1997, CSOM has designed and presented training sessions at national conferences and at local and regional training events. It has quickly become clear, however, that the demand for training on a range of issues related to sex offender management can be met only partially by these events. There is also a great interest in and need for curriculum materials that can be used by probation and parole agencies, treatment providers, victim advocacy groups, training coalitions, sex offender treatment networks, and related organizations to disseminate more widely the knowledge that is emerging in the sex offender management field.

Issues and Cautions for Users

As individuals and agencies prepare to use this curriculum, CSOM recommends that they keep the following issues and cautions in mind.

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive Information

One of CSOM's tasks has been to facilitate the exchange of information and experience among agencies involved in sex offender management. The curriculum material draws heavily from the practical experience of individuals who are involved in the delivery of treatment to sex offenders. This curriculum attempts to strike a balance between simply describing a range of practices on the one hand and, on the other, articulating what seems to be emerging as effective practice based upon emerging research. The curriculum materials

contain extensive references to published literature and research findings. Where there is significant debate about specific aspects of sex offender-specific treatment, we have tried to highlight the issues and evidence, and have encouraged trainers to determine how best to use the information.

Qualifications of Trainers

Every attempt has been made to ensure that the materials in this training curriculum are complete and that they identify reference materials and resources. However, the delivery of treatment interventions to sex offenders is a specialized skill area within the broader delivery of general mental health services. It is strongly recommended that those who deliver this curriculum have a sound experience base in specialized sex offender treatment as well as in training and group facilitation.

Team Training

Based on emerging practices in jurisdictions around the nation, this training promotes a multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach to sex offender management. As such, CSOM recommends that trainers who are specialized in the delivery of sex offender treatment be joined by others representing the various professions with whom a treatment provider would likely collaborate—probation/parole professionals, polygraph examiners, victim advocates, and those who provide treatment to the victims of sexual assault. This approach will provide expertise and insight into the different disciplines involved in the work, and will model the collaborative approach that is highlighted herein.

Adapting the Curriculum

This curriculum is intended for adaptation. It should be adapted to reflect:

- *The Audience.* The most important fact for users to understand is that this curriculum is not designed for a clinical audience. It was not created to teach someone how to conduct sex offender treatment. Rather, it is designed for a non-clinical audience, primarily those other professions who are involved or interested in sex offender management. Material in this curriculum is particularly relevant for line probation and parole officers as well as for their supervisors and policy makers. It is also relevant for collaborative interagency teams who are involved in sex offender management. Users are encouraged to adapt the materials to provide more detail for some audiences and less for others based on their needs. For instance, the section on effectiveness of treatment and practice patterns might be of great interest to policy level officials. On the other hand, the section on the detailed components of treatment—including the specifics of how probation and parole officers might interact with treatment—would probably be of more interest to line staff and first line supervisors.

- *The Time Available for Training.* The curriculum has been developed in two versions. The short version can be presented as a 90 minute briefing. The long version outlines a full day session. The time can be further varied—depending on the amount of discussion allowed and the time devoted to learning activities. Users may even want to consider breaking the training into several sessions over weeks or months.
- *The Number of Participants.* Much of the curriculum can be delivered in lecture style, supplemented by activities and discussion. It is strongly recommended, regardless of the audience size, that provision be made for substantial discussion and exchange among small groups of participants. This is an exercise in adult learning. One has to assume that the experiences and knowledge base of participants will be a valuable part of their training experience. There may be disagreements, debates, supporting examples of individuals' own experiences, etc. Each small group should have a skilled trainer or facilitator assigned to move it through discussions and exercises.
- *Local Environment.* It is not possible to tailor this curriculum to reflect practices in each and every community in the nation. Much of what is offered is relatively new, and may not fit well with the reality of available resources or expertise. For instance, many jurisdictions may simply not have access to the type of sex offender treatment that is outlined in this curriculum. If access to treatment is not readily available to the agency or community where the training is being conducted—either because of funding constraints, or the limited availability of treatment providers trained to provide the service—users may want to modify this curriculum to reflect that. Such users may want to develop some discussion questions or exercises to begin to plan for increasing access—either through pursuing more funding options or through working with local mental health professionals to encourage the development of more capacity.
- *Varying Knowledge Levels of Participants.* One of the lessons CSOM has learned in delivering training in a variety of settings is that often the participants in the training represent a wide spectrum of experience and knowledge about sex offenders or management issues, including treatment. Some participants may be new probation officers who have never before supervised a case load, much less a specialized sex offender case load. Other participants may be seasoned officers who have educated themselves on sex offender supervision and management issues, and who have extensive experiences with offenders, with treatment providers, and with victim advocates.

It is suggested that anyone planning a training that will utilize these curriculum materials take steps to make the training meaningful to the specific audience. Users may want to survey participants in advance, if possible, to develop a better sense of their experience and knowledge levels. If there is wide

variation in participants, trainers may consider clustering those with similar experience levels into discussion groups. This would allow seasoned officers to exchange ideas, react to the materials presented, and provide support to one another. At the same time, very inexperienced officers could work through the material at a similar pace, guided by a trainer and/or facilitator.

Conversely, users might take a different approach, deliberately mixing participants of different levels of experience. In this instance, users should explain that they have chosen to do so, and invite participants to exchange their ideas. More junior officers can feel free to query those who have more knowledge and experience.

- *Special Consideration.* The presence of a victim advocate or a treatment provider who is skilled at working with victims is a particularly important aspect of a training team. Users should be prepared for the fact that there may well be survivors of sexual abuse among the training participants. Because the curriculum deals openly with sexual assault and its impact upon victims, survivor participants may have a strong reaction that requires the assistance of someone experienced in working with victims. It is best to acknowledge at the outset of any training that there probably are survivors of sexual assault among the participants and that any participant should feel free to excuse himself or herself from the discussion at any time, to speak about his or her own experiences, or to request assistance or support from a faculty member. It is particularly important to be prepared for these possibilities and to be prepared to validate, support, and assist the survivors of sexual assault in the context of the training. It is also important to identify other resources such as a sexual assault crisis service or victim advocacy organization to whom participants can be referred if they need follow-up assistance.
- *Adult Learning.* Perhaps the most important caution for anyone planning this training is to remember that this is an opportunity for adult learning. This means that participants will bring to the training a very rich set of experiences—whether or not they are specifically related to sex offender treatment. Do not plan this training as straight lecture; instead, plan to use the learning activities and discussion questions in the curriculum. Invariably, participants in trainings such as this take away much more useful information when they have the opportunity to engage actively in discussions that relate the material being presented to their own experiences.

Curriculum Content

Two Versions of the Curriculum

In order to make these materials as useful as possible, the curriculum is presented in two different versions. Please note that additional materials and curricula are available or in development, and can be used as companions to the materials here. Some of the subjects mentioned relatively briefly—supervision practices, use of the polygraph, involvement of victims in the management of sex offenders—may be of particular interest to the audience of this training. Please check the CSOM Web site for their availability (www.csom.org).

The *short version (1½ hours)* has been designed for policy makers, judges, prosecutors, managers, and line staff who are not directly involved in sex offender management. It may also be used as a way to introduce this material to others who are not now involved in sex offender management but may work with a sex offender population in the future. These individuals might include victim advocates, social service agency representatives, treatment providers, and new probation officers who are being educated about the different types of criminal offenders who are supervised in the community. Finally, this version may be used as the framework for a presentation at a conference, where a varied audience that shares an interest in sex offender treatment issues could be reached. The purpose of this version is to provide a brief introduction to what constitutes sex offender treatment, how it differs from traditional mental health treatment, and what we know of its effectiveness. This version also emphasizes the importance of treatment as a component of a comprehensive approach to the management of sex offenders in the community.

The *long version (8 hours)* is designed for line staff and their supervisors who have significant direct responsibility for the community supervision of sex offenders, and for other members of supervision teams (victim advocates, polygraph examiners, law enforcement officers, etc.) who would benefit from a fuller understanding of treatment interventions. It covers the material in the shorter version, but includes much more detail on the specifics and rationale for sex offender treatment, specific techniques, and how the treatment provider and probation/parole agents work together. It provides information on issues such as working with denial, which will greatly assist officers in their day-to-day work.

The following table highlights the differences in length for each version. The curriculum is designed to move from general concepts into specific applications, with the addition of each section. Trainers are encouraged to adapt the content to the specific needs of their audience.

Curriculum Version	Short 1 ½ hours	Long 8 hours
Section 1: The Basics of Sex Offender-Specific Treatment	30 minutes	2 hours
Section 2: Sex Offender-Specific Treatment Outcome Research	15 minutes	30 minutes
Section 3: Elements of Sex Offender-Specific Treatment	25 minutes	4.5 hours
Section 4: A National Perspective on the Current State of Practice	10 minutes	30 minutes
Section 5: What to Look for in a Treatment Provider	10 minutes	30 minutes

Organization

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

Section 1: The Basics of Sex Offender-Specific Treatment

This section articulates the goals and learning objectives of the training curriculum as a whole, outlines the content of the curriculum, identifies the core elements of sex offender-specific treatment, highlights the ways in which it differs from traditional mental health treatment, and identifies the rationale for a specialized approach to the treatment of sex offenders in the community.

Section 2: Sex Offender-Specific Treatment Outcome Research

This section summarizes the evidence emerging from empirical research on sex offender treatment, outlining what we know about its effectiveness, what we know about what works for what types of sex offenders, and the implications of this research for treatment and for collaborative efforts with supervision agencies.

Section 3: Elements of Sex Offender-Specific Treatment

This section details the elements of sex offender treatment, covering such difficult issues as handling denial, addressing cognitive distortions, and increasing victimization awareness. Additionally, this section introduces the major domains of treatment, the use of medications in treatment, and ethical standards of practice.

Section 4: A National Perspective on the Current State of Practice

This section summarizes the results of a national survey conducted for the Safer Society Foundation which gathers information from treatment providers regarding their practices and clients. It is the most comprehensive picture of current practice that is currently available.

Section 5: What to Look for in a Treatment Provider

One of the most difficult issues facing the criminal justice system—the courts, probation and parole agencies, prosecutors, etc.—is how to know which treatment providers will make effective partners in the management of sex offenders in the community. This brief section outlines the factors that should be considered in selecting sex offender-specific treatment providers to work with the criminal justice system in the management of this population.

What You Will Find In This Curriculum

This curriculum contains the following components:

Long and Short Versions of the Curriculum

Within both the long and short versions of the curriculum you will find:

- **Section Outlines.** The section outlines provide an overview of the major topics and the time allocated for each topic.
- **Lecture Content and Teaching Notes.** The lecture content and teaching notes include narrative content and suggestions for using the presentation slides and learning activities, and for facilitating both large and small group discussions.
- **Presentation Slides.** These highlight the main points made during the lecture (and can be printed and distributed as additional participant materials).
- **Participant Materials.** These materials are intended to be copied and distributed to audience members for use during and after the training. There are several types of such materials:
 - *Learning Activities.* Materials and instruction sheets are provided for participants. There are several different learning activities in the curriculum. They include a case study, a community mapping activity, role-plays, discussion questions, and more. Training notes that accompany the lecture content alert trainers to the goal of each exercise and provide suggestions for implementation. These activities

serve several purposes: first, they reinforce and provide practice in applying the information that is being presented; second, they provide opportunities for adults who learn in different ways to maximize their learning experience; third, they allow the trainer and participants to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise that other participants bring with them; and finally, they create variety in the experience that keeps interest and motivation high.

- *Reference Materials and Other Handouts.* These documents are intended to serve as illustrations/examples of the topics covered in the lecture, or as sources of additional information for individuals who are interested in learning more about a particular topic or issue that has been covered in detail during the training.

Icons

The following icons are used to help guide you through the materials:



This icon indicates the beginning of a new lecture topic.



This icon indicates a Learning Activity. When users see this icon, they should remember that this is an opportunity for breaking the audience into smaller discussion groups.



This icon indicates a question that the trainer might like to pose to the group. In most instances, the questions are a follow-up to the lecture content. In others, the questions are presented as an alternative to the lecture format.

Other useful symbols include:

➤ **Use Slide #:** These appear in the Teaching Notes alongside the relevant Lecture Content text. With a few exceptions the slides provide illustration or additional detail, but do not introduce any new information. They are designed to reinforce key lecture points. The slides are stored in a PowerPoint format. This allows them to be used with an LCD projector or to be printed out and copied onto transparencies for use with an overhead projector. In addition, they can be printed out as handouts with three or six slides per page and copied for distribution to participants.

📖 *Refer to Handout:* This is used for all types of handouts—exercises, illustrative materials, and reference handouts. These materials can be duplicated for inclusion in a packet given to participants to use during the training.

Evaluation Form

An evaluation form has been included for trainers to use to assess the usefulness of the training to the participants. It can be duplicated and distributed to participants for completion at the end of the training. CSOM hopes that trainers will use it and make copies of the completed forms available to CSOM so that future editions of this and other training curricula can be refined and improved.

Acknowledgements

The Center for Sex Offender Management would like to express sincere thanks to Lloyd Sinclair, the primary author of this curriculum. Thanks are also due to three individuals who served as the primary content reviewers of the curriculum: David D'Amora, Robert McGrath, and Robert Prentky. Judy Berman, Peggy Burke, Madeline Carter, Scott Matson, and Tom Talbot of the Center for Sex Offender Management were responsible for editing, developing participant materials, and converting the curriculum to a Web-based and CD-ROM format.

Recommended Readings

One of the resources that is sometimes helpful in preparing to design and deliver a training is a familiarity with the current literature in a particular field. CSOM's National Resource Group—a twenty-five member group of leading practitioners and researchers in the field of sex offender management—has developed a list of recommended readings, reflecting the state of the art in research and practice in sex offender management. The list includes bibliographic references for almost 100 published documents, and is organized into several major categories, including:

- Sex Offender Treatment
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Community Notification, Registration, Civil Commitment
- Juvenile Sex Offenders
- Probation and Parole Supervision
- Research, Recidivism, and Statistics
- Risk Assessment and Prediction
- Treatment Guides
- Victim Issues

The recommended reading list is not intended to be an exhaustive list of references—but rather should be used as a starting point for those interested in learning more about the effective management of sex offenders in the community. The recommended reading list for treatment issues is included first, as it will be of most relevance to this particular curriculum.

The complete list of recommended readings in all the topic areas is included for those who may have an interest in a broader review of the literature.

Sex Offender Treatment

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Assessment of Sex Offenders

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Civil Commitment

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