

TOPIC: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO WORK WITH VICTIMS AND VICTIM ADVOCATES? (20 MINUTES)



WHY ARE WE HERE? (4 minutes)

We know that sexual assault can be a devastating crime. We know it affects victims in different and profound ways, ways that are both visible and invisible to the larger community. It can affect their behavior, their relationships, their sense of safety and well-being, and their ability to engage in daily activities (such as work or school) for the rest of their lives. Sexual assault also affects the larger community: parents who must be concerned for their children, women and girls who avoid engaging in activities alone because they feel unsafe, schools and other youth serving organizations that must be on guard against potential perpetrators wanting to work with children, and communities that are fearful of sex offenders.

We are here today to talk about the relationship between the work that we do and those who are affected most by sexual assault – the victims and potential victims of sexual assault crimes and members of the community. We will begin by spending some time talking about why this is an important conversation to have, then spend most of our time talking about what we know about victims and how they are affected by sexual assault, and how we can use this knowledge to do a better job of managing sex offenders in the community. We expect that you will leave here today with the tools you need to take steps toward applying this information to your work, and the beginnings of an action plan for implementing or providing additional support to a victim-centered approach to sex offender management in your community.

LISTENING TO VICTIMS (4 minutes)

The prevention of a sexual re-offense by an offender is our primary goal, and is one of the most difficult tasks facing us as professionals who are working with sex offenders who are under community supervision and treatment. However, collaborating with victims and victim advocates represents one of our best opportunities to both prevent future victimization by known perpetrators and to promote healing of past victims. By taking the time to listen to victims, we can learn a great deal about the offenders that we are supervising. Victims often know more about the perpetrator and how he/she

>Use Slide #5
Why Are We Here?

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<p>operates than anyone else, and are often more cued in to danger signs than those supervising or treating the sex offender. Having some kind of connection to the victim can help a supervision officer manage a sex offender more effectively.</p> <p>Additionally, many victims have a strong need to be heard, individually and/or collectively. Being listened to and taken seriously by the criminal justice system, having their safety concerns recognized and responded to, and knowing that the perpetrator who offended against them is going to be prevented from hurting them or another victim in the future can often help a victim to heal.</p> <p>Around the country, jurisdictions that are applying a multi-disciplinary model of sex offender management are learning <i>that no single entity alone can effectively minimize the likelihood of future sexual assault</i>. Only through the use of a collaborative model of sex offender management can those responsible for sex offender management effectively manage these offenders and minimize the risk of future sexual victimization.¹ Victims and victim advocates can be a valuable part of these collaborations. The information that the victim can provide about an offender's behavior can be very useful not only to supervision agencies, but also to treatment providers, who can address with the offender how this behavior fits into his pattern of offending and what the implications of his behavior could be. When supervision officers and offender treatment providers engage victims and victim advocates in their work, the chance of increased victim and community safety is much more likely since the information available is more specific and accurate to each given offender.</p>	<p><i>NOTE: The male pronoun is used throughout this curriculum for ease of use because the majority of sex offenders are male. However, we recognize that females can and do offend sexually; this will be discussed later in the curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: Patterns of offending refers to the pattern of behaviors that precede a sexual assault, which are specific to each offender and which constitute the target of relapse prevention treatment. Information about patterns of offending and relapse prevention can be found in the CSOM curricula, Supervision of Sex Offenders in the Community and An Overview of Sex Offender Treatment for a Non-Clinical Audience. These curricula are available at www.csom.org.</i></p> <p><i>Note: For another important resource on how victims, advocates, and supervision and treatment staff can work together effectively to manage sex offenders in the community, see "Partnering in Response to Sexual Violence: How Offender Treatment and Victim Advocacy Can Work Together in Response to Sexual Violence," referenced at the end of this section.</i></p>
<p>THE ROLE OF VICTIMS</p>	

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<p>(5 minutes)</p> <p>Many of you have already given considerable thought to the role of victims in your work, and some of what we discuss today may already be familiar to you, and perhaps even in place within your community. Others of you may have faced practical or systematic obstacles to working with victims and victim advocates, such as lack of access to victim contact information. Each jurisdiction has different resources and handles the subject of victim involvement differently. Some jurisdictions have designated staff within community supervision agencies to handle victim contact; some routinely get a victim impact statement during pre-sentencing but don't pursue any kind of further contact; some leave it to other agencies (like the prosecutor's office), which may already have victim support systems in place to work with victims, help them through the criminal justice process, and determine what their needs are; and, some are mandated by the legislature to provide specific services to victims, such as notification of offender status. Some communities have a variety of resources for victims, while others have very little. One of the goals of this training is help you assess where you and your jurisdiction are in relation to this issue and what steps you might be able to take if you decide to pursue this strategy further.</p> <p>Managing sex offenders effectively requires us to think about victims of sex crimes differently than we might with victims of other kinds of offenders. Most sexual assault victims know their offenders. In addition to focusing on what we are obligated by law to do for victims of sexual assault, effective sex offender management calls for an understanding of what working with victims of sexual assault can teach us in our efforts to more safely manage sex offenders under community supervision.</p> <p>This training does not focus only on individual victims. In addition to talking about victims, we are also going to explore how victim advocates in the criminal justice system and community-based settings such as a rape crisis center can be involved in managing sex offenders. We know jurisdictions are in different places with respect to how they work with victim advocates. As we will discuss, victim advocates offer a perspective quite different from that of individual victims. Their perspective is informed by working with many different victims, which helps them to see both commonalities and differences among victim experiences.</p> <p>COMMON GROUND BETWEEN SUPERVISION OFFICERS AND VICTIMS/VICTIM ADVOCATES (5 minutes)</p> <p>Perhaps the biggest benefit of looking at the work of sex offender</p>	

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<p>increased satisfaction that we are more effectively accomplishing our goals.</p> <p>We will come back to this issue to talk about additional benefits and specific strategies for achieving these benefits. The important thing to note here is that whatever time or energy we expend in working with victims and victim advocates is repaid to us many times over. Our work with advocates can help to achieve many important benefits – most importantly, it enhances our ability to fulfill our mission of increasing public safety through the more effective management of sex offenders.</p> <p>THE COSTS OF NOT INCLUDING VICTIMS (2 minutes)</p> <p>When considering whether to implement a victim-centered approach to sex offender management, it’s also important to consider the cost of <i>not</i> working with victims and victim advocates. We agreed earlier that our goal is to effectively minimize the likelihood of recidivism through collaborative, evidence-based responses. Despite the best efforts of victim advocacy groups, courts and corrections systems, treatment providers, and others, no one has been able to accomplish this difficult goal on their own. The fact is that we need each other and what each discipline has to offer.</p> <p>When victims and victim advocates are not part of our strategy, at best we lose out on the potential benefits we just discussed. At worst, these potential allies can become our opposition. If victim advocates do not understand and trust the process of sex offender management and do not understand the process by which we make decisions, victim advocates may be among the first to challenge us or to comment publicly when one of the perpetrators under supervision commits a new offense. Victims who do not see their involvement, information, and safety issues taken into account may experience the criminal justice system as <i>part</i> of their victimization, rather than an effective <i>response</i> to it. In the absence of support and information about supervision, victims who are family members of a perpetrator, or the non-offending parent in an incest case (which we’ll discuss later) – may very well collude with an offender to violate no-contact orders and other conditions that can undermine the authority of supervision agencies and could contribute to additional offenses. In other words, it may not always be easy to add a new element into our sex offender management strategy, but the costs of failing to do so are significant.</p>	

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<p>involve others and we must recognize the ongoing risk that offenders may pose to victims and the community. From this philosophical perspective, it makes complete sense why we would look to victims and victim advocates to inform our policies and strategies—because they are most acutely aware of the dangers that sex offenders pose in general and/or an individual sex offender poses in particular. The philosophy of the victim-centered approach is thus a way of thinking about our work that acknowledges the unique risks posed by sex offenders and the unique strategies that are needed to address those risks.</p> <p>The victim-centered approach is also a method – it means putting the philosophy into practice. There are three dimensions to the process of implementing this method, or three different ways in which we must alter our thinking and our approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We begin with the practical implementation of that new philosophy. With our lens expanded to include victims, we must reframe the questions that guide our decision making. Thus, rather than only asking ourselves as we have traditionally done, “What is best for the offender?” or “What is the best way to control this offender?”, we also must ask, “What is best to maximize safety for the victim and for potential victims in the community?”. This question serves as a guide as we make both policy decisions and individual case decisions. Sometimes the answers will be the same, but sometimes they will be vastly different. For example, the best way to control a particular offender may be to place him back in a former job where the supervisor is familiar with his background and his <i>modus operandi</i> (M.O.), and has agreed to cooperate with the supervision plan. If one of the offender’s victims also works there, however, a conflict between what is best for monitoring the offender and what is best for the victim would arise, and under a victim-centered approach, the decision would likely be made to forbid the offender from working there. • Another dimension of the victim-centered approach is broadening our multi-disciplinary approach to sex offender management to include victim advocates. Victim advocates are professionals who can help ensure that the general concerns of victims are addressed in the protocols that we establish to deal with sex offenders, and that the policies we design are victim-friendly. They can be of vital importance in holding criminal justice and treatment professionals accountable for implementing a victim-centered approach. <p>Whether we decide to create an informal relationship through which we confer with advocates on policy issues or on difficult case decisions, or we create a more formal structure whereby</p>	<p><i>requires a victim-centered perspective.</i></p> <p>>Use Slide #9 Victim-Centered Approach as a <i>Philosophy</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: One model management process that you may have heard about, documented by English, Pullen, and Jones (1996), is called “The Containment Approach.” It describes a team approach that includes supervision, treatment, and polygraph to contain the behavior of sex offenders.³ Victim advocates are not explicitly included in this early formulation, but it is conceptually consistent with what we are describing here as a victim-centered approach.</i></p> <p>>Use Slide #10 Victim-Centered Approach as a <i>Method</i></p>

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<p>advocates are part of the jurisdiction’s sex offender management policy team, or we decide to include a victim advocate with the treatment provider and polygraph examiner as part of our individual case management team, the important thing is that those responsible for supervising sex offenders create an alliance with victim advocates that informs the way sex offenders are managed in the community. (We will talk more about this in the next section.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim advocates can also play an important role in the implementation of the third dimension of the victim-centered method, which is the incorporation of victim input and involvement. Like the addition of victim advocates to our multi-disciplinary approach to sex offender management, victim input can be incorporated into our approach to sex offender management in many different ways. The essential element is that victim input is sought out and used to help those responsible to provide supervision and treatment staff make decisions in the management of individual sex offenders. The input could come from a written victim impact statement that was taken at the time of sentencing. It could come from the statement of a victim at a parole hearing. It could come from having an advocate make contact with victims whose offenders are recently placed on community supervision to find out more about their current situation and concerns. Or it could come from victims calling when they have information to share about offenders’ compliance with the conditions of his supervision. In some jurisdictions, a victim advocate is part of the case management team, and is the one who initiates contact with the victim, accompanies the supervision officer on offender home visits as another set of eyes that may recognize something the officer may not (given their different perspectives and backgrounds), and participates in the planning and management of individual cases in order to best protect victims. Each jurisdiction, working with local advocates, makes the decisions about how to best solicit and use victim input. <p>Working effectively with victims also includes paying attention to the secondary impacts of sexual assault on those close to the victim. Individuals who experience harm by knowing or caring for the victim are usually family members (but may include friends, relatives, acquaintances, and members of the community), who have been significantly affected by the victim’s experience, whether through damage to their own relationships with the offender, or by their secondary experience of the victim’s pain. When we work to manage the perpetrators of child sexual abuse, for example, we may also become involved with the victim’s parents, who may themselves experience a certain level of trauma. This is especially true for</p>	<p><i>NOTE: Define “case management team” for any participants unfamiliar with the term.</i></p> <p><i>A case management team is a group of individuals who can augment the management provided by a supervision officer. A case management team typically consists of a supervision agent, the offender’s treatment provider, and a polygraph examiner. However, variations of these teams exist in communities around the nation. The use of the case management team allows the probation officer to communicate routinely with others who are familiar with the offender’s day-to-day activities.</i></p>

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<p>incest victims and their non-offending parents, or parents of sibling incest offenders and victims whose home lives may have been severely disrupted and permanently altered by the disclosure of sexual abuse. Although we will spend more time later in the training talking about both primary victims and those who experience harm through their connection to the victim, it's important to recognize that when we discuss including victim input, we need to include all of these individuals in our thinking.</p> <p>Many jurisdictions doing this work are finding that the offender's family members (whether the victim is a family member or not) are another group of individuals significantly impacted by the offenders' actions, whose participation in the healing process is essential. When family members are in denial, they may permit the offender to have contact with potential victims. They may also be among those to experience the impact of a negative community response to the offender returning home. How we educate and include primary victims and those closest to them in what we do can have considerable impact on the effectiveness of sex offender management.</p> <p>To summarize then, the victim-centered approach is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophy that places the safety of victims and potential victims at the forefront of how we manage sex offenders in the community; and • A method of sex offender management that requires us to consider and incorporate three new dimensions into our multi-disciplinary approach: examining each policy or case management decision through a client lens that asks about the potential impact of those policies and decisions on victims and/or what is best for the victim(s); including victim advocates as part of the sex offender management team; and seeking victim input to inform individual case management strategies. <p>TOPIC: CONCLUSION (15 MINUTES)</p> <p>I hope that this introduction has provided a clear understanding of</p>	<p><i>NOTE: The impact of sexual assault on those closest to the victim will be covered more thoroughly in Section 2.</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: Restorative justice, community justice, and the community-centered approach are other victim focused approaches currently in use by jurisdictions around the country. Participants may have heard of these and may wonder about their relationship to the victim-centered approach. Like the victim-centered approach, each of these has philosophies that articulate a role for victims and/or victim advocates in the criminal justice process, including the philosophy that victims and potential victims should be viewed as clients of our criminal justice system, and that the input of victims and/or victim advocates should be included in our policy and case decisionmaking processes.</i></p> <p>>Use Slide #11 Conclusion</p>



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<p>why jurisdictions are adopting a victim-centered approach to sex offender management, and why we feel it is important to spend this time talking about victims, victim advocates, and the role they can play in effective sex offender management.</p> <p>Does anyone have any questions about what we have discussed so far?</p> <p>At this point you may be thinking about how this approach may or may not work in your jurisdiction, or how what you've heard can help you improve already existing policies of including victims and victim advocates in the management of sex offenders. In the next section, we will talk about some of your past experiences with victims and victim advocates and see what lessons we can derive from those experiences. We will also discuss the field of victim advocacy.</p> <p>The third section of this curriculum will cover what we know about adult, child, and familial victims—who they are, what their experiences are like, and what impact sexual assault can have on their lives. The more we can understand about the perspective of victims and victim advocates, the more effective we can be in bringing their valuable perspective into our work on sex offender management.</p> <p>In the fourth section, we will discuss practical ideas for integrating victims and victim advocates into your sex offender management strategy.</p> <p>Finally, we will talk about where you are in your jurisdiction in terms of your work with victims and victim advocates, and either how to get started in moving toward a victim-centered approach or, if you have already started, how to improve on what you already have.</p>	

¹ D'Amora, David, and Gail Burns-Smith. "Partnering in Response to Sexual Violence: How Offender Treatment and Victim Advocacy Can Work Together in Response to Sexual Violence," *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, The Official Journal of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers 11 (October 1999): 295-306.

² Littel, K. (2000). *Engaging Victim Advocates and Other Victim Service Providers in the Community Management of Sex Offenders*. Silver Spring, MD: Center for Sex Offender Management.

³ English, K., Pullen, S., and Jones, L. Eds. (1996). *Managing Adult Sex Offenders on Probation and Parole: A Containment Approach*. Lexington, KY: American Probation and Parole Association.