

Section 1: Introduction

Use Slide #1: The Effective Management of Juvenile Sex Offenders in the Community

This curriculum is intended to provide a wide variety of practitioners – including supervision officers, treatment providers, victim advocates, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement officials, and others among you who work with juvenile sex offenders – with an overview of important components related to the effective management of these youth in the community.

As a framework for the training, we will consider these components through the lens of what has been termed “The Comprehensive Approach to Sex Offender Management,”¹ which includes the assessment process, specialized treatment approaches, supervision strategies, reentry considerations, and legislative trends such as registration and community notification.

We will also approach these various components from a developmental perspective, recognizing that youth who commit sex offenses are not simply “little adults.” As such, the intent of this training curriculum is to help you to understand what we know about these youth – including some of the key differences between adult and juvenile sex offenders – and what the implications are for how we can most effectively assess, treat, supervise, and otherwise manage them, all with a goal of ensuring that these youth can be successful, healthy, and productive contributors to the community. Successful youth translates into safer communities.

Use Slide #2: Key Points

To make sure that we are all on the same page about the youth we will be talking about in this curriculum, I want to outline a few key points:

Note to Trainers: *While addressing the issue of very young children with sexual behavior problems is beyond the scope of this training, please refer to the handout Recommended Readings for Information about Young Children with Sexual Behavior Problems for more information.*

- First, we are focusing on adolescents, generally between the ages of 12 and 17. Some young children have sexual behavior problems as well, but they are a special population in and of themselves, and the information we’ll be covering about juvenile sex offenders is not applicable to them.
- In addition, although we know that females engage in sexually abusive behavior, the majority of juvenile sex offenders appear to be male. As such, most of the research and professional literature on juvenile sex

offenders has been written about adolescent males. With a few exceptions, this training will be focused on the adolescent male sex offender.

- Finally, we recognize that many youth who come to our attention for engaging in problem sexual behaviors may never be processed in the juvenile court system. Rather, they may be referred for services by school personnel or social services agencies, or we may become aware of them through the course of a maltreatment or family services case – or because they have been deemed to be a child in need of services – rather than through a delinquency route. Some of what we will cover in this training may have applicability for these youth, but for the most part, the information we will be presenting is designed for youth who have been referred to and already adjudicated by the juvenile courts.

Use Slides #3–4: Goals of the Curriculum

Goals

Consistent with the overall framework, then, the goals of this training curriculum are to provide an overview of:

- What is meant by a “comprehensive approach” to managing juvenile sex offenders in the community;
- What is known about the incidence and prevalence of sexual offending by juveniles;
- The key differences between adult and juvenile sex offenders and the implications those differences have on how to most effectively manage these youth;
- The ways in which specialized – and developmentally appropriate – assessments can enhance and inform decisionmaking throughout the system;
- Promising approaches to treatment for juvenile sex offenders, and how they differ from treatment for adults;
- The goals and elements of a success-focused strategy for supervising juvenile sex offenders in the community;
- Specific ways in which professionals can facilitate successful community reintegration and stability of these youth in the community; and
- The potential implications of various legislative responses originally designed for adult sex offenders that have in some cases been applied to youth.

Use Slide #5: Overview of the Curriculum

In order to attain these goals, this training curriculum is organized into the following sections:

- *Introduction:* We will begin with a brief overview of the elements of a comprehensive approach to managing sex offenders and the underlying philosophies that drive this approach.
- *Overview:* We will “get to know” these youth by highlighting national statistics, outlining current research and literature about characteristics and potential subtypes, and understanding trends in how the juvenile justice system has responded to these youth.
- *Assessment:* We will address the importance of specialized and ongoing assessments as a critical piece of effectively managing juvenile sex offenders in the community; important elements that should be considered in these assessments, including risk factors that may increase the likelihood of reoffense; and the kinds of juvenile-specific assessment tools that are available to help guide decisionmaking.
- *Supervision:* We will discuss how community safety can be enhanced by a balanced supervision philosophy that supports accountability and rehabilitation, and that promotes the success of youth; explore the importance of specialized training, caseloads, and supervision conditions; address aspects of case planning and management; and highlight some promising supervision strategies specifically for use with a juvenile sex offender population.
- *Treatment:* We will summarize what is happening commonly in juvenile sex offender treatment programs around the country; discuss the types of interventions that seem to have the most promise in reducing recidivism; highlight some of the current controversies in the field; and discuss the available treatment outcome data.
- *Reentry:* We will talk about the seemingly unbalanced placement of youthful sex offenders in residential or institutional facilities; common challenges and potential solutions related to their transition and reentry back into the community following such a placement; and consider the various elements of a comprehensive reentry and aftercare plan.
- *The Legal and Legislative Responses:* We will highlight some of the legal trends and changes that have occurred in recent decades; the application of federal registration and community notification laws to juvenile sex offenders; the enactment of sexually violent predator/civil commitment laws – some of which apply to juvenile offenders; and some of the important concerns and questions that have been raised when these laws

are applied to youth in the same manner in which they are applied to adult sex offenders.

Before we launch into our substantive discussions, let's take some time to get acquainted with one another and to learn a little bit about the work that each of us does every day.

Note to Trainers: *It is important to allow time for introductions in order to set a tone for the training that will emphasize and encourage participation and interaction. It is also an opportunity for the trainer to develop a sense of the group's level of knowledge and experience, if that was not accomplished prior to the training event. In a large group, participant introductions could be made around individual training tables. If the group is smaller, introductions of all participants to the whole group would be appropriate.*



Learning Activity: Introduction of Faculty and Participants (30 minutes)

The facilitator or lead trainer should introduce the faculty and/or invite them to introduce themselves, and include their experience in working in the field of sex offender management and with juveniles in particular.

Ask each participant to consider one word that describes their experience or perception of working with juvenile sex offenders.

Participants should then introduce themselves by providing their name, the nature of their job, their experience in sex offender supervision, treatment, victim advocacy, or other fields, and their expectations of the training. Participants should then share the word they would use to describe their experience or perception of working with juvenile sex offenders.

The Framework for the Training

Note to Trainers: *Under the most ideal circumstances, the training audience will be multidisciplinary in nature, and participants will represent a range of professionals involved in juvenile sex offender management (e.g., court personnel, treatment providers, juvenile probation/parole officers, victim advocates, school personnel). In the event that the participants represent a single discipline, it will be important to acknowledge that they represent only one aspect of the juvenile sex offender management process.*

Now that you've gotten to know each other a little bit, it should be apparent that some of you have different roles and responsibilities in the management of juvenile sex offenders. And that highlights an important point: that this work is complex. It involves multiple agencies and multiple professionals, each of whom

is responsible for specific and often unique functions and activities. In years past – and even in some jurisdictions today – these agencies and professionals did not (and do not) work closely with one another. Instead, they “did their own thing” and tended not to concern themselves with the work of the other agencies and professionals. It may be that different agency missions, confidentiality limits, limited understanding of one another’s roles, and even “turf” issues contributed to the tendency to operate in isolation.

However, it is generally agreed that no single agency, entity, or individual can or should assume full responsibility for the complexities of juvenile sex offender management – nor are they likely to be effective on their own. Rather, the roles and responsibilities of each agency or individual tends to be interdependent and synergistic. When each of these roles and responsibilities is integrated into a more comprehensive approach, and one in which a shared vision and common goals exist, resources and outcomes can be maximized.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, we will use this kind of integrated and comprehensive approach as a primary foundation for this training. One well known, innovative, and influential model is known as the Containment Approach.² This model emphasizes the importance of multi-agency collaboration, and suggests that sex offenders can be more effectively managed through the close working relationships and information-sharing between treatment providers, supervision officers, and polygraph examiners. In a similar vein, the Comprehensive Approach to Sex Offender Management suggests that several elements are critical to the sex offender management process, and that a range of entities play important roles in these efforts.

 **Use Slides #6–7: Defining the Comprehensive Approach to Sex Offender Management**

Generally speaking, the Comprehensive Approach is designed to answer three primary questions:

- Starting from the moment that a disclosure of juvenile-perpetrated sexual abuse is made or a victim is identified, what are the critical activities and processes – or key components – that are necessary to facilitate juvenile sex offender management effectively?
- Who are the various stakeholders that must be involved?
- How should professionals approach their work? In other words, what are the key tenets or principles that underlie what they do?

Use Slide #8: Fundamental Principles of the Comprehensive Approach

Starting with the “how” question, the Comprehensive Approach is driven by five fundamental guiding principles (you will see these listed in the center “bubble” of slide number five):

- *Victim-Centeredness:* This means that we cannot simply be offender-focused in our work. For every juvenile offender, there is at least one victim. So although a primary focus of our work is to prevent further victimization, promote public safety, and assist these youth with leading productive, crime-free lives, it is equally important to attend to the needs and interests of the victims.
- *Specialized Knowledge:* Although working with youthful sex offenders is similar in some ways to working with other juveniles in our justice system, there are important differences as well. Therefore, to be most effective, professionals in this field must possess specialized knowledge about juvenile sex offenders, victims, and effective interventions for this special population.
- *Public Education:* As you know, sexual victimization is a significant concern in our country. In fact, it is considered to be a public health problem. Much like other public health issues – such as tobacco use, drinking and driving, and risky sexual behaviors that lead to HIV/AIDS – a key to prevention involves an informed public. Dispelling myths and misperceptions about these youth and their victims, while providing information about effective management (and prevention) strategies is a critical piece of the puzzle.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation:* In today’s day and age, the concept of evidence-based practices has become very important. This means that, ideally, what we do is based on the best available research on what works – and what doesn’t work. We must monitor and evaluate our practices to make sure that what we are doing has the desired impact. And if we find that what we are doing isn’t effective, we must be willing to refine and adjust our practices.
- *Collaboration:* As I have mentioned already, collaboration is vital to effectively managing this population. The sharing of information and resources, as well as having a common goal of preventing further victimization, among all of the agencies that work with sex offenders and their victims, is critical to ensure a more comprehensive, consistent, efficient, and effective approach. With juvenile sex offenders, key stakeholders should include – but not be limited to – supervision officers, treatment providers, victim advocates, judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys, law enforcement officers, school officials, and family members, among others.

These core tenets or principles represent the “underpinnings” of the Comprehensive Approach. These guiding principles should be considered and incorporated into all of the operational components of sex offender management, which are outlined next.

 **Use Slide #9: Defining the Comprehensive Approach to Sex Offender Management**

The “who” and “what” questions of the Comprehensive Approach are answered through an examination of the key components, represented in this graphic by the “bubbles” on the perimeter. Those components or elements, which are interrelated in many ways, are:

- Investigation/Adjudication/Disposition;
- Assessment;
- Treatment;
- Supervision;
- Reentry;
- Registration; and
- Community Notification.

And as you’ve seen in the outline of the curriculum sections, we will be focusing on each of these components in more detail throughout the course of this training, with the exception of the investigation, adjudication, and disposition component. That’s primarily because, as I mentioned earlier, this training is focused on managing youth who have already been adjudicated. Suffice it to say that without careful investigations, victim-sensitive court processes, appropriately crafted sentences, and informed prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges, our ability to manage these cases effectively will be hampered.

In closing, all of the agencies who work with offenders, victims, families, and the community at large have a role to play in the effective management of this population. Each entity brings a unique perspective to – and responsibility for – working toward the prevention of further victimization. I’m looking forward to discussing with you some promising ideas about the “what, how, and who” of juvenile sex offender management, and I hope that this brief introduction has provided you with a good idea of what we will be covering from this point forward.

Does anyone have any questions about what we have discussed so far?

We will next move on to the Overview section.

¹ CSOM, 2002a; Carter, Bumby, & Talbot, 2004.

² English, K., Pullen, S., & Jones, L. (1996). *Managing adult sex offenders: A containment approach*. Lexington, KY: American Probation and Parole Association.