



COURT SERVICES & OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY *for the* DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Community Supervision Services

FACT SHEET SEX OFFENDER UNIT

OVERVIEW

The Sex Offender Unit (SOU) is one of CSOSA's special programs responsible for the supervision of sex offenders released to the community on probation, parole and supervised release. SOU's mission is predicated on the belief that all of our decisions and case planning must enhance community safety overall. SOU proactively manages this population by assessing offender risk to community safety, identifying high risk behavior and strategically addressing risk through close supervision, treatment or incarceration. SOU's mantra is "No new victims."

SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT

Sex offenders assigned to SOU must undergo an initial psycho-sexual risk assessment by one of our sex offender treatment providers. If treatment is deemed appropriate by the therapist, the offender is required to attend a minimum of weekly group treatment sessions and individual sessions as determined by the therapist. Sex offender treatment can last between 12-24 months or longer, followed by an indefinite period of aftercare. Sex offenders also are required to submit to a series of polygraph examinations that are designed to break an offender's denial of their crime(s), obtain a sexual history, and determine compliance with the treatment objectives. Therapists work collaboratively with the community supervision officers (CSOs) to ensure the offenders are meeting their treatment and supervision obligations. Limited confidentiality between therapists and CSOs exists so each can share information freely about the offender's compliance. At the conclusion of treatment, all sex offenders are required to present in writing and orally their "Relapse Prevention Plan" to their CSO and CSO's supervisor. This serves as a means of documenting the offender's risk avoidance strategy while ensuring the offender has sufficiently learned how to be successful.

CLOSE SUPERVISION

Sex offenders initially are placed on Intensive or Maximum supervision, depending on their known criminal history, mental health status and past adjustments to community supervision. This means that CSOs are required to meet with the offender face-to-face no less than once or twice per week. CSOs are also required to regularly maintain contact with other people associated with the offender (i.e., family, counselors, employers, etc...). The supervision level is subject to change depending on an offender's adjustment.

- **CSO / Offender Contacts**

Face-to-face contacts with offenders allow CSOs to assess an offender's current state of mind, obtain pertinent information on an offender's activities since their last contact, record any changes that may have occurred, and keep the offender focused on their supervision obligations. When an offender misses an appointment it is considered to be a violation of their conditions of release and usually suggests that problems exist and action is needed on our part.

- **Fieldwork/Collateral Contacts**

CSOs are constantly in the community visiting offenders, family, and friends where they live, work and worship. This allows CSOs to determine if the offenders have access to potential victims. For example, CSOs conducting home verifications on a convicted child molester will be looking for signs that a child has been to the home or where children are situated within the immediate environment. Meeting with collateral contacts allows the CSOs to determine if offenders are complying with their supervision obligations and verify information previously provided by the offenders. CSOs work hard to convince the various collateral contacts to become involved in an offender's success. It is often the case that family, employers, and friends will contact the CSOs when they feel the offender is headed down the wrong path.

- **Accountability Tours**

CSOs are required to perform accountability tours with DC Police. In practice, CSOs and police officers partner to perform home verifications. This initiative enhances communication between CSOs and the police on the offenders we supervise and builds a collaborative relationship in the supervision of those offenders.

TOOLS THAT ENHANCE CLOSE SUPERVISION

- **GPS tracking**

This electronic monitoring system allows for a heightened degree of supervision for the most at risk offenders. GPS tracking allows CSOs to:

- place a strict curfew on offenders, thereby restricting their movements outside of the home during critical times.
- enforce "exclusion zones," which are areas or specific addresses the offender is prohibited from entering.
- track an offender's movements in order to determine if the offender is going near schools, parks, or other locations deemed high risk.
- Link GPS tracking data with MPDC crime reports to determine if offenders on GPS were at or near reported crimes.

- **Computer monitoring**

SOU conducts searches of sex offenders' computers to determine whether a sex offender is accessing pornography or other prohibited material over the Internet. SOU recognizes that sex offenders who use the Internet to access child pornography or solicit sex from minors pose a serious risk to community safety. Computer searches often reveal evidence that a sex offender continues to indulge their deviant sexual interests thereby increasing their risk to reoffend.

- **Polygraph testing**

Polygraph exams are administered in certain cases to help CSOs determine if offenders are being truthful when confronted about their behavior in the community. Polygraphs are typically used to determine if offenders have engaged in any new crimes, had contact with children or violated the terms of their release conditions. Although polygraph results cannot be used as evidence of a crime or violation of release conditions, CSOs are able to use the information to modify their approach to supervision in order to minimize the potential risk the offender poses to community safety.

- **Search and Seizure**

In many cases CSOs, with the authority given by the court or parole commission, conduct searches of an offender's person, residence, work or vehicle. Search and seizure authority is typically granted in cases where a sex offender is considered to be a sexual predator or serial offender where the probability of recidivism is extremely high. In all cases where searches have been applied evidence of new criminal conduct or violations of release conditions has been seized and the offender was removed from the community. This is a powerful tool in the supervision of sex offenders intent on hiding their sexually deviant activity, allowing for a higher degree of accountability for the offender.

TRAINING

SOU's success is largely dependent on how well staff is trained. Therefore, great effort is made to see that all staff assigned to SOU are specially trained on subjects such as: sex offender typologies, sex offender community management and sex offender treatment. We realize that staff must have knowledge that will give them the ability to recognize precursors to recidivism, assess treatment progress, develop comprehensive supervision strategies and how to respond to some of the unique problems this population presents.

PARTNERSHIPS

SOU sees the value of developing and maintaining strong partnerships with other stakeholders. SOU has existing partnerships with MPDC, the United States Attorney's Office, DC Superior Court, the FBI Innocent Images Unit, Metro Transit Police, PG County Sex Offender Registry, Montgomery County Sex Offender Registry, State of Virginia Sex Offender Registry, DC Rape Crisis Center, DC Housing Authority, DC Child and Protective Services, the DC Victims Advocacy Center, US Probation, US District Court for DC, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the US Marshal's Service.

EXAMPLES OF OUR SUCCESS

SOU can boast about a number of cases in which our efforts have removed dangerous offenders from the community before a crime was committed or where offenders have made positive progress. Here are some of those examples:

- * Last year a parolee on parole for a series of sexual assaults against female children was discovered viewing pornographic websites while at work. His employer notified his CSO, who later determined that the sites depicted youthful looking males. His parole conditions were promptly modified to prohibit him from viewing or possessing pornography, he was prohibited from accessing the Internet, having contact with children,

working or volunteering in an environment where children are present and we obtained the authority to conduct unannounced searches of his residence and computer. A subsequent search was conducted of his residence and computer, which revealed notebooks filled with screen names, phone numbers and websites in them. A closer examination of the material seized showed ages next to most of the screen names and phone numbers, many of which were under the age of 18, some as young as 14. Also discovered was a phone number and contact person for the Red Cross. Follow up with the Red Cross revealed that the offender had contacted them and inquired about volunteering with one of their programs that catered to youth. With this information, the offender's parole was revoked.

- * A parolee was mandatorily released from prison earlier this year. Case records revealed that the offender had been diagnosed as being a pedophile with a preference for underage boys. In fact, for several years the offender had been hospitalized at St. Elizabeths Hospital after the court found grounds to commit him as a sexual psychopath. The offender was prohibited from having contact with children, he was prohibited from using a computer, he was ordered into a half way house for up to 120 days, and to participate in sex offender treatment. This offender presented the highest risk to community safety and was therefore immediately placed on GPS tracking so that we could monitor his movements throughout the community. GPS records showed the offender traveling to the Martin Luther King Library. When confronted about his purpose there, the offender admitted that he was using the computer to access the Internet. GPS records also showed the offender taking a route from his CSO's office to the halfway house that was considered to be out of the way, consequently causing him to be late for check-in at the halfway house. Further investigation by the CSO of the GPS records showed that the offender had traveled to Anacostia Metro station at a time when children get off from a school that was nearby. When confronted, the offender had no plausible explanation for being in that area and missing his curfew with the halfway house. Based on this evidence the CSO sought a warrant for his arrest and his parole was subsequently revoked.
- * A probationer on probation for sexually abusing a minor had been in abscondance for several years. After police apprehended the offender, the court immediately reinstated his probation. A review of the case file revealed that he had a prior conviction for a similar offense in Ohio. The offender was prohibited from having contact with children. Shortly after his reinstatement on probation, his assigned CSO conducted a routine home verification. When the CSO arrived at the residence, he was greeted by an 8-year-old female child who was determined to be of no relation to the offender. The offender was not home at the time and the child's mother was no where to be found. The CSO immediately pulled the child out of the home and contacted MPDC to investigate. The offender was located by the CSO and instructed to report to the supervision office immediately. Investigators interviewed the child and determined that the offender had sexually assaulted her and others in the neighborhood. The offender confessed to the crime of molesting the 8-year-old that evening and was subsequently sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence.
- * A parolee reported for a scheduled visit with his CSO. During the meeting the CSO caught the offender making an inconsistent statement about his tardiness to the appointment. The offender's therapist was contacted and advised that the offender, a pedophile, had been performing side work for neighbors in his community and we had concerns about him having potential contact with minors. A polygraph examination was scheduled as a result. During the pre-exam interview the offender admitted that he molested an eight year-old boy some months ago. When questioned by his CSO, the offender acknowledged that he sexually assaulted the boy in the laundry room of his apartment building and that the boy lived nearby. His CSO was able to get the offender to disclose the name and address of the boy, at which time police were contacted. As a result of this disclosure, the offender's parole was promptly revoked and a criminal investigation initiated.

- * CSOSA was contacted by the US Park Police who were investigating an assault that occurred at Logan Circle in the District of Columbia the previous month. The investigating detective informed us that witnesses observed the suspect wearing an ankle bracelet and a device attached to his hip. Recognizing that the witnesses' description of the device matched those worn by offenders on GPS tracking, we proceeded to review all of our GPS records for the timeframe in which the crime was committed. After our analysis was completed, we were able to put one offender at the scene of the crime at precisely the timeframe identified by the detective. In fact, GPS showed that he left the crime scene at a rate of speed that suggested that he was running from the area. Our office forwarded a photo of the offender on GPS whose tracks put him at the crime scene. He was eventually picked from a photo spread by one of the witnesses. An arrest warrant was prepared and he was arrested by the US Park Police at the parole office. The offender, when confronted with the GPS evidence, confessed to the assault.