



CSOR

*Though I have fallen,
I will rise. - Micah 7:8*

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**THE VALUE (OR NON-VALUE) of HELPING PEOPLE
WRITE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THOSE UNDER THE PURVIEW
OF THE SOMB AND/OR REQUEST MORE INFORMATION FROM THE PAROLE BOARD**
Susan Walker

In our CSOR attempts to advocate for those sentenced with a sexual offense, we spend a great deal of time in a variety of activities, assisting in challenges to what often appear to be inappropriate treatment approaches/comments. This includes writing or helping people write complaints against treatment providers, evaluators and polygraph examiners. It also often takes the form of letters to the Parole Board on behalf of people who feel that they have been treated unfairly by that body.

While the Parole Board chair always writes me back (for which I am grateful), the answers are seldom satisfying. The basic response is that the Board is justified in making the decision(s) they made because of secret information that is available to them, but cannot be shared with me, or for the most part, not shared with the clients themselves. The communication form that the Parole Board fills out (checks off) to reveal their reasons for not granting parole is very limited in what it says, and does not necessarily give the person being considered a sense that there is a real awareness of the massive attempts that have been made by the client in preparing for parole. A letter was received today from Joe Morales, Chair of the Board of Parole, stating that the information delivered to the Parole Board that kept this man from parole was private, and other than the greeting and signature, that was pretty much the content of the letter. The Parole Board is extremely busy – that is obvious; however, there ought to be a way to get some sense of why parole was withdrawn!

The current re-writing of the SOMB Standards and Guidelines in which a number of client advocates have been involved is just about done, and will soon be ready for presentation to the Legislature. It has been hoped that the new words and the “tenor” of the Standards and Guidelines would open the door for more “founded complaints” against SOMB providers clients feel have been less than fair with them in the processes of treatment, evaluation and polygraphs. A letter was also received today from the SOMB Program Manager, stating that a complaint I did with a client in March of 2017 against a treatment provider had been declared “unfounded”. There is no explanation given as to why it was unfounded – it just was! There was a lot of work and time put into that complaint, and the real question becomes – what does it take to earn a “founded” complaint? Does the pendulum always swing the direction of the powerful entity? Is it a sham 99% of the time to even offer a path for filing a complaint? There are many grievances filed inside the CDOC; perhaps the client wins one of those on rare occasions, but it feels as if the hours spent filing grievances trying to achieve some sense of fairness in a powerful system are wasted.

While human beings must accept the consequences for bad behavior, whether it be at the hands of the law or the fruits of poor decision making on a daily basis resulting in a variety of consequences, it feels as if governmental entities have a grievance or complaint process because it is protocol to have one. There is little effort to address the real issues the client is upset about – seldom is an attempt made to see the situation through the eyes of the person initiating the grieving process or filing the complaint. In spite of the fact that the non-powerful seldom win against the powerful (at least not quickly or easily), it is worth fighting for some level of justice in unjust situations. We can argue about the meaning of justice and who deserves it and who doesn't, but the process ought to offer a real chance of meaningful relief for the person or persons filing the complaint and asking for answers to hard questions. This common, ordinary, not so powerful person will continue to seek the relief and the truth on behalf of those who may at the moment, be even less powerful than me!

CSOR Meetings in Denver

Our CSOR Meetings are held quarterly in downtown Denver. The purpose for the quarterly instead of monthly meetings is two-fold: 1) We like to invite professionals to attend from non-sexual offense organizations but who do frequently work with our men and women, along with the clients, family members and friends who come. We believe that in order to make a bigger case for rational sexual offense laws, and to enlarge our voice as well as to educate, case managers and others from the V.A., Volunteers of America Housing Programs, attorneys from law firms, housing providers, parole representatives, Mental Health Center of Denver, Savio House, the Brain Injury organization etc. ought to be invited to, and attend our meetings when they can. To make it easier for them to attend, we meet from 11:30 – 1:00 and serve lunch at all of our meeting which are always held on the first Wednesday of December, March, June and September. 2) AFC holds a monthly family support meeting, and we do not feel that it is necessary to replicate that meeting. Some people attend both CSOR quarterly meetings and AFC monthly meetings.

If you have family members and/or friends who would benefit from the education and fellowship provided at these meetings, tell them about the next CSOR Meeting which is December 6 (Wednesday) from 11:30 – 1:00 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 16th and Grant, toward the back of the church on 16th. Parking is available in lots across from the church or on the street. **Our speaker for this next meeting is Melissa Roberts, Director of Parole for the Colorado Department of Corrections.** Interested family members and/or friends should RSVP to Susan Walker at susancwalker1@gmail.com, or call me at 720 690-7125.

LIFETIME SUPERVISION ACT REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE NOVEMBER 2017 Points of Interest

If your facility does not have this report, ask your facility Librarian to get it for the library. In the meantime, here are some of the important pieces of the report.

- During fiscal year 2017, 164 new court commitments were admitted to the CDOC under the lifetime supervision provisions for sex offenses.
- During the fiscal year, 26 offenders were removed from lifetime supervision status. Of these 26 offenders 11 died, 8 were released from LSX designation by court order discharge, 4 were released from LSX designation by the courts to probation, 2 remained in custody but had their LSX sentence discharged, and 1 had his LSX designation discharged while on parole.
- On June 30, 2017, 2,389 offenders were under CDOC supervision for sexual offense convictions sentenced under the lifetime supervision provisions. Of these 1,192 were in state prisons, 550 were in private prisons, 621 were on parole, and 26 were in other locations (e.g., Community Corrections, interstate correction compact transfer, and jail backlog).

- There have been 786 offenders under lifetime supervision who have released to parole for their first time as of June 30, 2017. Of these offenders, 115 paroled during FY2017 under their lifetime supervision sentence. Some offenders who had their parole revoked have re-paroled second and third times, totaling 888 releases to parole since the inception of the Act.
- The Parole Board completed 928 applications for release hearings for 773 lifetime supervision sexual offenders during FY 2017; the Parole Board granted discretionary release for 154 of the 773 lifetime supervision sex offenders, although not all of these had paroled by the end of the fiscal year.
- The Parole Board completed 80 revocation hearings for 50 lifetime supervision offenders in FY 2017. 28 hearings resulted in revocation of parole, 5 hearings resulted in continuations on parole, 4 offenders self-revoked their parole, and 13 hearings were not yet finalized at the end of the fiscal year.
- Of the 888 releases to parole since the Lifetime Supervision Act went into effect, 263 have resulted in revocation (some offenders have released and been revoked multiple times). Of the 263 revocations, 50 offenders returned with new felony convictions incurred while on parole. During FY 2017, 10 offenders returned on new felony convictions. (NOTE: It would be nice to know if these were sexual offense convictions or otherwise – we are not told).
- Early discharge has been approved for two offenders since the inception of the Lifetime Supervision Act.
- The FY 2017 CDOC budget included \$4,236,895 for assessment, treatment, testing (including polygraphs), program evaluation and registration coordination for incarcerated sex offenders in state facilities. Approximately \$242,500 was allocated for polygraph testing. For offenders on parole, \$2,687,792 was spent for approved sex offender treatment provider services for FY 2017.
- On June 30, 2017, a total of 4,476 sex offenders were on the referral list for treatment, 353 of these being lifetime supervision offenders.
- During FY 2017, of 1,812 lifetime supervision offenders incarcerated in a state or private facility, 953 did not meet the criteria necessary to be placed on the referral list. A total of 457 lifetime supervision offenders were in treatment (Track 1, Track II, Maintenance and Transition) and 402 were on the global referral list.
- For lifetime supervision offenders who participated in treatment at any point during FY 2017, the average length of stay in treatment was 308.4 days in Track 1 classes and 232.1 days in Maintenance Phase classes.
- During FY 2017, 208 lifetime supervision sex offenders met criteria for successful progress in prison treatment. Fifty-nine of these offenders were released to parole and none were placed at community corrections centers during FY 2017. There is a delay between meeting criteria and being placed in the community or on parole, which explains why the number released was lower than the number that met criteria.
- As of June 30, 2017, slightly more than 29% of providers who responded to the (SOMB) survey (i.e. treatment providers on the outside) reported having more than 20 sex offenders currently serving an indeterminate sentence at their treatment program or private practice. In contrast, 7% of providers reported having no sex offenders currently serving an indeterminate sentence at their treatment program. Approximately 26 of participating providers reported the average length of stay for sex offenders serving an indeterminate sentence was between 1 – 6 years, and 19 providers reported an average length of stay in treatment ranging from 7 years to over 10 years. Further, five in 68 responding providers indicated that sex offenders sentenced under the Lifetime Supervision Act had an impact on their program’s ability to provide services.

The above excerpt is from the Lifetime Supervision Act Report to the Legislature November 2017. For the most part, I used segments of what was directly written in that report. In a few places, I paraphrased or added personal thoughts. This is a small percentage of the whole report, which contains several pages of graphs etc. as well as the written material. I have tried to choose the parts of the report I thought would be of most interest.

Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14

ATSA Conference

It was my privilege to attend the ATSA Conference (Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers) this year in Kansas City, Mo. A comfortable day's drive from Denver, the Conference provided a wonderful chance to hear some of the excellent researchers and treatment providers from the U.S. and a number of other countries. A Conference highlight is shared!

Plenary Session

The Plenary Session was led by Patty Wetterling. Patty, as you may be aware, was the mother of Jacob Wetterling who was kidnapped many years ago by someone who lived in the area (not a total stranger). This man approached three young boys, let two of them go, and then proceeded to take Jacob. Jacob's body was found very recently, along with his soccer sweatshirt.

Jacob's Mom was one of the major movers behind the national registry. She based her activism in this area on a report in a Psychology Today Magazine from the 1980's which stated that 80% of people who had committed a sexual offense would re-offend. The woman who gave that information to Psychology Today (not a research magazine) has admitted years later that she pulled that 80% figure "from the air". It was based on nothing.

One of the reasons this sticks in my mind is that I heard Kim English who has worked for the Division of Criminal Justice here in Colorado for a very long time, along with Grieg Veeder of THE, state that 80% recidivism figure at one of the early SOMB Meetings I attended after my son's offense. At that early date in my involvement, I didn't know a lot about sexual offending, but I knew enough to realize that the recidivism figures I had seen from published research articles, way back 10 – 15 years ago, did not postulate a figure anywhere near that 80%.

Supreme Court Judge Kennedy used that 80% figure to support his claim that the recidivism rate for those who had sexually offended was frighteningly high. Partly because she saw these figures, she supported the start-up of the sex offender registry, which grew into the monster it is today! Patty is a very intelligent woman who in spite of the pain she experienced over the loss of her son, was able to see clearly after a number of years that the registry had gone way over the limit in terms of its "outing" of those who committed a sexual offense, whether they were juveniles or adults, low risk or high risk. The national and local media pushed the need for extreme watching of this population, and SORNA (Sex Offense Registration and Notification Act) was born!

Patty and many others now realize that the extremes to which this Act has gone have caused those with a sexual offense in their background a great deal of trouble. Why is that a problem? Because being on the registry, according to many research articles, makes it difficult to find and keep housing, to get and keep a job, and to just live from day to day. The registry has gone way beyond law enforcement, and is now available to anyone and everyone. It is flashed daily on a myriad of computer sites for the whole world to see. The recent court case by Alison Rittenberg which found the registry punitive and unconstitutional for three men, adds fuel to the fire beginning to blaze against the registry as we know it.

Patty Wetterling is now working with ATSA and other groups advocating keeping juveniles off the registry. Juveniles are considered "low hanging fruit"; because they are children and under the age of 18, they are seen as less likely to re-offend, and perhaps worthy of a second chance.

This is a huge step forward in and of itself, but for those of us who know all too well what the registry does to everyone who is on it (not just law enforcement but numerous and growing numbers of public registries as well), it just doesn't seem like enough! The reality of the situation is that the public does not see our men and women as worthy of escaping punishment way too much of the time, in spite of the fact that our recidivism rates are extremely low, and significantly lower than those of other felony populations. We will see how this proceeds in the coming weeks, months and years. If the will is there to remove juveniles, perhaps the Law Enforcement Only (LEO) Registry proposed by NARSOL (Nat'l Ass'n for Rational Sex Offense Laws) will someday soon become a reality!

Giving to CSOR

Occasionally I receive e-mails from people who want to show me how to raise money for CSOR. While this kind of assistance can have great results, it is clear that our mission is not a popular one. Re-framing our message in some ways may result in more people giving and for longer periods of time; however, we must admit that we do not have a popular subject to talk to people about – that is, as long as we focus our attention on those who have committed a sexual offense.

The majority of people who seek and receive assistance from CSOR do not contribute financially to our work. It is clear that many who are incarcerated and currently in the system on the outside as well, may not be able to contribute, but some can and do. Other can and don't. To those who give from the little that they have even from behind the bars, we say a hearty thank you. Your gifts of stamps, dollars, drawings, poems and letters are appreciated. Each year, my piano is covered with Christmas cards from men inside. For those who are now out and indeed in some cases making good money, we say, please consider giving on a **regular** basis to continue the work that benefitted you in prison, and still speaks on your behalf on the outside.

There is a man who was in prison here in Colorado who is now in New Mexico. He has been working, not only on treatment and supervision issues, but has been trying to start a ministry that will assist men coming out of prison with a sexual offense. In spite of dollars that he could be putting toward his own ministry, he gives \$20.00 a month when he can to CSOR, which is most of the time! CSOR receives gifts from some inmates, while not monthly, repeatedly over time. They range from \$10.00 per money order to as much as \$200.00. We also receive not just a couple of stamps, but books of stamps from some incarcerated persons!

Families and friends are big users of CSOR services, calling on us daily for mentoring and counsel (not attorney type counsel) on a regular basis. They are most likely to give while their loved one is in prison, and to stop when they get out. An outreach to this population needs **ongoing support**. There are some who cannot give, and others who will not give. Some give from their hearts ongoing for which we are extremely grateful. It is not just our own family member who is important; the scourge affects all with a sexual offense! Many of them have no-one who cares.

One of the areas that is in dire need right now is housing. As people leave prison and come to the community, they need a place to live. CSOR is currently able to assist with very small amounts of money occasionally as people have need for a housing deposit, are behind on their rent, or are going to be on the streets. Increased giving would help a lot with these needs, especially in the case of the older person leaving prison, or the person coming out without any family or friend support.

Rather than hiring a fundraising company to charge CSOR a lot of money to raise dollars, I am appealing to those of you who have benefitted from the work of this organization, and those who see this organization as one attempting to share God's love and His heart with our men and women, to give as you are able to support the work we do! I am most grateful to the volunteers who work with me on a daily basis to make things better for our men and women.

Please consider a gift (if you can) before the end of 2017 – invite your families to give as well! Gifts can be sent to CSOR, P.O. Box 27051, Denver, Co. 80227. If families have a computer, gifts can be sent through the website at www.csor-home.org

Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas. - Calvin Coolidge

NEWS TIDBITS

1. A recent meeting at the Legislature by the Sentencing in the Criminal Justice System Interim Study Committee agreed to move forward one bill which would give judges discretion in terms of sentencing someone under the Lifetime Act or under determinate sentencing. We do not know how far this bill will go, but the fact that the committee agreed to advance it is very good news. Judges are sometimes hesitant to sentence under the Lifetime Act because of the backlog of people in the Colorado Department of Corrections who have not been able to get into treatment mandated in statute. This bill is sponsored by Republican Senator Kevin Lundberg.
2. At the same meeting, a registration bill sponsored by Democrat Daniel Kagan was not moved forward, perhaps partly because one piece of the bill stated that people who enter Colorado from another state who have been taken off the registry there, would also not have to be on the registry here in Colorado. It is possible that Senator Kagan will move this bill forward without the “blessing” of the Interim Study Committee. Other parts of the bill would keep people who are disabled cognitively or physically (or both) from having to come to the police stations to register. In fact, the police are already in some instances, going to nursing facilities/assisted livings to help folks register. A third section would allow early consideration of release from registration for the same population if it were ascertained that they were no longer a threat to public safety.
3. Housing continues to be a major issue for those re-entering society with a sexual offense. The good news is that more and more people are getting into the act of either providing housing for those with an offense, or finding available housing for them! A man who came out of prison not too many months ago e-mailed and asked me if I would meet with him regarding a vision he had for providing housing to those he left behind in prison. We are in the process of setting a time to get together as soon as possible. A woman who takes part in advocacy activities also called me a few weeks ago to ask if we could meet regarding housing issues. Ideas for solutions to the challenges around housing for our men and women seem to be coming from our men and women themselves, and in some cases from our supportive families. They are definitely not coming from the SOMB – this organization does not see housing as in its purview. Re-entry on the outside seems to try to find housing solutions, but also ends up relying a lot on resources either provided or “under construction” from those of us directly affected by this problem. A big challenge continues to be the difficulty around the Parole Board’s release date – if an apartment is found for someone, most people cannot afford to pay to have a landlord hold it until the Parole Board lets the person out.

My Grown Up Christmas List

No more lives torn apart.

That wars would never start.

And time would heal all hearts.

And everyone would have a friend.

And right would always win.

And love would never end.

This is my grown up Christmas list.

Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in this newsletter are CSOR's. Any concerns about overall content may be sent to: Susancwalker1@gmail.com.