



COALITION FOR SEXUAL OFFENSE RESTORATION

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

5th Edition

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CSOR Newsletter
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CSOR Holds Initial Meeting with DORA

Re: The 2015 Sunset Review of the Sex Offender Management Board

On Tuesday November 4, we met with Mr. Bryan Jameson, a policy analyst working at DORA with Mr. Bruce Harrelson, the architect of the last SOMB Sunset Review in 2009. A phone conversation was held with Mr. Harrelson in late September to find out when DORA would start working on the Sunset Review due during the 2015 legislative session. Mr. Harrelson indicated that work on the SOMB Sunset Review would begin around the 1st of November.

Mr. Harrelson asked Mr. Jameson to call us and set up an initial interview which he did. We asked at that time whether he had read the Outside Evaluators' Report on the SOMB and he indicated he had just been given this assignment, and had not read it. We set an appointment to get together about a week down the road, and when we met on November 4th, asked again regarding whether he had read or was reading the report. He indicated that he had not, and liked to start out "listening and asking questions". Mr. Harrelson assures us, however, that he and Bryan Jamison are committed to a report that reflects excellence and a thorough understanding of the issues.

We had prepared a bulleted list of items to be discussed, starting out with areas of concern that the SOMB is already working on in committee, and then proceeded to areas where the SOMB is still thinking about how to move forward. Of particular concern to us are areas relating to 1) the containment model; 2) the polygraph; and 3) the Child Contact Assessment (CCA) and blanket exclusion of all who have offended sexually from being around children. While all of these and other areas will be discussed in the process of re-writing the Standards and Guidelines, the discussions in this group, heavily laden with victims' representatives, D.A.'s, probation officers etc., will be challenging.

We are grateful that the SOMB has included a voting representative on the committee (Susan Walker) for those who have offended, and the audience, which has good representation from advocates, is able to speak and express their opinions. Susan Walker (CSOR), Dr. Chris Renda (AFC) and Roberta Ponis (unaffiliated) have met to plan our approach, and will continue to do so over the time that this committee meets (at least two years). Laurie Rose Kepros, Director of Sexual Litigation for the Public Defender's Office and Steve Parker from CDOC/SOTMP, as well as other audience and committee members, also support us. The conversation is more productive than it has been in year's past, and we hope to avoid the gridlock that the U.S. Congress and administration have experienced and will experience going forward!

Copies of the two or three pages of bulleted points were sent, after the meeting with Mr. Jamison, to CSOR supporters, AFC members and unaffiliated advocates, so that they can plan visits to DORA as well. It is my hope and prayer that we can use this Review as an opportunity to further advocacy efforts, as well as promote working together on prevention and education issues. It is crucial that newly elected members of the House and Senate in Colorado become knowledgeable re: the myths and facts surrounding sexual abuse, and this report will assist in that education.

We are including below the bullet points discussed with Mr. Jameson.

Meeting with Bryon Jameson
DORA
Sunset Review of Sex Offender Management Board
November 4, 2014

Comments from the Coalition for Sexual Offense Restoration (CSOR)
Susan Walker, Director

Positive Outreaches by the Sex Offender Management Board

- Increased family/offender advocate engagement
- Standards and Guidelines are being rewritten
- A committee is working on continuity of care issues
- A committee is working on getting rid of the SVP (sexually violent predator) designation and the SVP assessment tool – suggesting to the legislature that registration for those with a sexual offense be changed from a “one size fits all” + SVP to a three tier system where the 3rd tier is what used to be SVP
- A committee has been meeting for a couple of years and has formulated new standards for the competency of sex offense specific therapeutic providers based not on hours of training, but on competency
- Focus groups were held across the state in anticipation of the Outside Evaluators’ Report (OER) being done as mandated by the Joint Budget Committee
- A national speaker has been scheduled for this November re: Risk, Need and Responsivity and how to make it work here in Colorado

Negative Issues that are spoken to in the OER of the SOMB, but that have not yet been addressed

- Victims’ Advocates continue to decry any suggestion re: changes that are reflected in the literature such as the fact that victims are now called “survivors” by almost everyone but Colorado. Unwillingness of advocates to get current with the literature and Evidence Based Practices (EBP).
- The same person who designed the SVP Assessment in 2004 and clearly belonged to the "no known cure" culture, has been invited back on the Board. Kim English, who oversees the DCJ Office of Research and Statistics, is designing the next instrument in the series. It will be used to identify registered offenders in a risk classification/leveling system (Tiers 1, 2 and 3). We are not pleased that Ms. English is developing this instrument, as her 2004 version was criticized in the Outside Evaluators' Report, but are glad that as long as registration is still around, there will hopefully be a tier system and the SVP designation as such will go away.
- Last year’s committee on Denial did not go far enough. Literature has shown that denial is not related to sexual offense recidivism. The literature shows that at times, denial and evasion of responsibility is actually associated with lower recidivism (see OER)
- SOMB criteria continue to give too critical a role to polygraph examinations which are clearly fallible – well defined single issue polygraphs have an accuracy of 90%. Sex history polygraphs are NOT well-defined single issue tests and accuracy is significantly lower. Easy for people to be deceptive on the test, but in reality to be telling to truth. What this means is that people who did nothing wrong can be deceptive, and thus sanctioned, and people who did do things wrong can be non-deceptive, and passed on to a position of less oversight in treatment and supervision.
- Inconclusive polygraphs are treated like deceptive polygraphs and the offender client has to pay for the next polygraph (another \$250.00) to try to have a non-deceptive polygraph. Polygraphers should pay for this next polygraph. Information on main patterns of past offending and the main psychological risk factors contributing to past offending must be determined by therapy team. THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE DONE BY POLYGRAPH – there are other methods that work (OER).
- CCA (Child Contact Assessment) is too complex and too long, and should generally not apply to those who have not offended against children. While it would be harmful if a father lived with the family and did offend against his child after having only an adult victim, it is also extremely harmful for children to be separated from their fathers for life (OER).

- Low Risk Protocol is useless – not based on empirical evidence, but on biased belief that all persons who have sexually offended will continue to re-offend. I sat on this committee years ago with Greig Veeder as chair (author of the “no known cure” in Colorado), and we told him at that time that they were starting from a position of bias and that the instrument would be useless. Yet the SOMB included it in their Standards and Guidelines.
- Accountability. Offender clients should not have to regurgitate exact police reports, and take responsibility for everything they were accused of in the police report. Victims get things wrong; witnesses get things wrong; the police get things wrong. This kind of extreme accountability does not relate to recidivism as shown in relevant literature (OER).
- Containment mode is fraught with problems. CST’s or containment “teams” don’t get along. Supervising officers, given the right to make the “last call” on things in the Standards, are NOT under the purview of the SOMB S and Gs. The S and Gs put too much emphasis on external control and too little on internal control factors (i.e. self-governing of the offender/client).
- The same person (Kim English from the DCJ) who designed the SVP Assessment Instrument, has been invited back on the board, and is also the author of the Containment Model. If we are truly moving away, not only from the words “no known cure”, but the spirit of those words, Kim English should not have been invited back on the board. We have not been able to get an answer as to why she was invited back, and can only assume it was a political decision from the DCJ/DPS/SOMB.
- The SOMB (Board) is too big. There is too much law enforcement/judicial/victim advocate presence and not enough therapist presence. Since the S and G’s only apply to therapists, evaluators and polygraphers, and not to parole or probation officers, judges, parole board etc., the main focus in terms of SOMB Board Members should be those for whom the S and G’s were written. We have talked with a leading senator about this issue, and he is very concerned about the size and composition of the board. We will be talking more with him re: this issue.
- On August 17, 2012, the Board expressed concerns about problems with DORA's handling of complaints. (i.e. not as timely or as thorough as what the ARC at the SOMB was). SOMB addressed concerns with DORA at that time, and there has been no official discussion since that time regarding complaints being moved back to the SOMB/ARC. We are still concerned that it may be suggested during the Sunset Review of the SOMB this year. Going back to "the fox guarding the hen-house does not seem the best thing to do.
- The client is not the person with the offense in the current Guidelines; it is the community. The changes in the Guidelines recommended by the OER would take the continued “spirit” of the “no known cure” out of the language in a number of the guidelines, and make it clear that the person with the offense is the client of the therapist with whom he/she is working. My personal formula for this is: “Restoration of the person with the offense = less people who are victimized = enhanced safety for the community”.
- Since 80% (according to the victim advocate community) of those who have offended have not been caught and convicted, prevention and education must be a top priority. The 20% of people who have been caught and convicted have millions spent on them across the U.S.A. and other countries, whereas the 80%, many of whom are fathers, coaches, cops, judges, D.A.’s , teachers, priests – may never be reported. There has to be a way for people who continue to offend in our communities and who may never be found out, to get the help they need, and for the children and adults they victimize to be able to come forward without severe consequences. Colorado law should reflect opportunities for pedophiles who want to stop and families who want to get back together, to do so without years of harm at the hands of law enforcement and criminal justice.
- The phrase “victim centered” has been used ad nauseum, and means very little. Caring about those who have been and who will be victimized is something that we all do, whether we advocate for those with sexual offenses or not. That is a given. Using the phrase, however, continues to divide us. The Standards and Guidelines should focus on those who have offended – that is who they were written for. Stating that they are “victim-centered” continues to encourage the old “no known cure” sentiments. Statements should be made in the place of that phrase that make it clear that all parties involved, no matter what their position or who they are advocating for directly, care about those who have experienced and those who will experience, sexual abuse. Using the victim-centered language continues to put a wall between the different groups that all care very much about reduction in the number of persons who are abused sexually.
- Those who have offended and been through treatment should now be on the education and prevention “team” and the SOMB needs to embrace them as valuable helpers in the fight to reduce sexual abuse. Time needs to be spent on determining how to bring them on board in a way that those who have been victimized or those who work directly with those who have been victimized can accept. They are, in some ways, the most valuable players when it comes to lowering numbers of people who are sexually abused.

“Maybe Christmas,” he thought, “doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas... perhaps... means a little bit more.” - Dr. Seuss in How The Grinch Stole Christmas.

David Prescott Presentation on Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR)

11-20-14

Susan Walker, CSOR

With Colorado finally moving away from “no known cure”, and considering the literature around RNR, there was a need for someone to assist with implementation of this model. David Prescott from the Becket Family of Services was invited to Colorado, and did a whole day presentation to therapists and other interested parties on the RNR and its implementation with integrity. He also addressed the Colorado Sex Offender Management Board the next day.

The talk included great thoughts such as, “do we want them to re-offend or not? What can we do? Who should we (professionals) be? Is that enough?” The take home message was that “motivation = internal/contextual, and is never forced, that goals should generally be approach based, not avoidance based, and that therapeutic alliance is crucially important in terms of treatment reducing re-offense risk.” He stated that therapists often consider themselves more helpful than clients think they are!

According to Prescott, the Risk Principle states that: effective programs match the level of treatment intensity to the level of risk posed by the client, and that mismatching can result in increased risk. The Need Principle states that effective programs target identified criminogenic needs (i.e. criminal interests, attitudes and beliefs and self-regulation and management challenges). The Responsivity Principle suggests that effective programs are those which are responsive to client characteristics.

CSOR and a variety of unaffiliated advocates are most grateful for these changes in direction that will make a “good life” more possible for those who have sexually offended.

Below, I have listed some memorable quotes from Mr. Prescott’s presentation – quotes that give even more hope that today and tomorrow promise more hope than yesterday!

- 1) Pills are not the same as skills.
- 2) Power and control need to be balanced with compassion and empathy.
- 3) People who are in pain get together with other people and talk.
- 4) Don’t lecture people – ask them questions!
- 5) Prisons are not giving a good return for the money – take a good probation/parole officer any day over prison.
- 6) Michael O’Connell – Seattle, wishes that he had not started “special programs” for those with a sexual offense
- 7) Patti Wetterling (mother of Jacob Wetterling) – wishes she hadn’t pushed for registry because it has gone too far.
- 8) High risk clients require twice as many hours of treatment as medium risk.
- 9) Medium risk clients require twice as many hours of treatment as low risk.
- 10) Psychopathic clients offend at higher rates – have higher risk, higher need, and lower responsivity.
- 11) GPS does not reduce risk – use it for what it is intended.
- 12) We (therapists) are good at making fast social judgments. We are bad at looking at all kinds of information and bringing it together.
- 13) It is necessary to treat both the criminal and the victim within the same client.
- 14) Saying sexual deviance to clients creates dissonance with them. Instead use the words – abuse-related sexual interests
- 15) When needing to bring up a serious and difficult topic with a client, he says: I have some real concerns. Would it be okay if I shared them.
- 16) Victim empathy literature has not born much fruit.
- 17) After a certain point, clients have the right to self-determination.
- 18) Deal with client motivation because it reduces risk.
- 19) Being kicked out of treatment is a risk factor in and of itself.
- 20) If we treat people like dogs, they start acting like wolves.
- 21) Denial is not a risk factor, according to many studies.
- 22) If we don’t treat a denier, how do we explain that to the next person that is offended against?
- 23) Sending people back to prison for denial or for pornography issues is useless – nothing good is going to happen to them there.
- 24) Clients are interested in their own survival.
- 25) 1/5th of positive change comes from the treatment model used.
- 26) 4/5^{ths} of positive change comes from therapeutic alliance.
- 27) Peoples’ conditions of release need to be assigned individually.

As we continue to work on the re-write of the SOMB Standards and Guidelines, it is essential that we keep these thoughts, as well as many others, in mind!

Apology

It has always been my intention to keep up with all of your letters at a respectable rate. I am sorry to say that I have fallen badly behind. An increase in parolees needing help as they re-enter, and some personal family challenges demanding my time have slowed me down. I hope to get to each of your letters personally over the next month.

As much as I would like to, I cannot be support for all of you, except in the way that I am already supporting you. If the therapists suggest that you contact me, it does not mean that they are misleading you, or telling you that I, individually, will be able to be your official support person. It does mean that I am one small glimmer of hope in terms of trying to marshal people to support you. The CDOC only allows each support person to be official support for around four people (although they might allow some of us to stretch that a bit). I am always available to unofficially support you, as are other CSOR and unaffiliated friends. I already support my son who has been out for six years and is on aftercare, have promised to support two other people who are not yet out, and sit on a Circle of Support and Accountability! I grieve deeply over each of your letters and talk with folks a lot about assuming a supportive role for you.

GETTING OUT!

My son has commented numerous times about the fact that when you are “on the inside”, all you can think about is getting out! It is a joyful day when you finally hear that you will be getting out on a certain date not too far away.

A few of you will “kill your number” and get out with no strings attached. Many of you, however, will do parole and treatment for a number of years, and some of you will be lucky enough to get to do probation at the same time you are doing parole! Not a happy thought. That joyful day when you heard you were on your way out quickly becomes something from the past as you travel away from CDOC incarceration and move toward a new kind of containment on the outside.

You thought you were going to get on with your life, I suspect. Perhaps you wanted to go to school, reunite with family and friends, get a job and a car (or motorcycle!), and experience a little “freedom” for a change. By the time you have gone from the prison to the parole office and stepped inside that door, your thoughts of doing your own thing, at least part of the time, and moving on with your life, have quickly faded, as they crash into pages and pages of rules and regulations you will now enjoy under the supervision of your parole officer.

You will also find out that first day that until you get to treatment and can write safety plans with the support of your treatment team, you won't be going much of anywhere. That usually happens between the second and fourth weeks that you are out. The usual places people can go immediately are: parole, treatment, re-entry and mental health. Parole officers differ in how many other places you can go and when you can go to them – places such as the grocery store, the barber shop, the laundromat may have to wait until you have gained enough trust from your supervising officer to allow these outings. Your curfew may be different than it is for others, again, depending on your supervising officer and what they think is appropriate for your first days and weeks on the outside.

Once you start treatment, you will get some help writing safety plans, and for people who are gaining the trust of their supervising officer, your horizon may start to expand somewhat. The trust that you are able to establish the first day you and your parole officer meet goes a long way toward building a healthy and positive relationship.

My advice is to use every day at CDOC, in treatment etc. to prepare for the next wave of life and learning on the outside. Yes, it seems way too long and confining, but once you get out, there will be different and difficult challenges. It is demanding, especially at first, but will continue to be a challenge as you are now expected to walk in different shoes than you did before you entered the Department of Corrections. What can you learn inside? Here is a list of things that my son talks about having learned over 5 ½ years:

1. Walk quietly and don't carry a big stick.
2. Learn what you can from every lesson that is afforded you. Growth opportunities are where we look for them, and while it is not necessarily the place anyone wants to grow, prison provides those growth opportunities on a daily basis.

3. Discard what you feel is bad for you, or not necessary for you to learn. Not everything in treatment or everything in chapel or on your job needs to go in your “bag of knowledge”.
4. Develop the ability to do and store a lot in a small space. When you get out, your apartment or the space you share with family or friend looks a lot better because of what you learned inside.
5. Make good friends that share your wholesome values and goals.
6. Ponder the things that seem harsh and unfair, and determine to be a person who values other human beings and their dignity both on the inside and the outside.
7. Engage in something you are passionate about. This varies from person to person, but those gifts you have that others may not have are part of your life’s mission, and you will be most fulfilled when you use them.

There is a verse in the Bible that says, basically, “I have learned to be content, wherever I am”. Those words were spoken by the Apostle Paul who spent time incarcerated. We can find discontent anywhere we walk in life, and the challenges you face on the inside are a reflection of the challenges you will face once you get out! One thing Mark (my son) did not anticipate was that he would feel as lonely as he did, even with family close-by. He missed the good friends he made in prison. After six years out and because of the progress he has made, he is now able to have relationships with many of those friends, some of whom are in treatment with him on the outside.

I get so many letters from CDOC that express sadness, broken-heartedness and pain, that I feel overwhelmed. One of my gifts is the gift of encouragement, and I try to encourage all of you as I write, to realize that the road you are now on is a road to somewhere! What you make of that road has the potential to make or break the rest of your life!

Money, Money, Money

Here are a few of the things CSOR has supported with the donations we have received this year:

1. A housing deposit for a person with an SVP designation whose parole officer felt was working extremely hard at earning money, and needed a place to live.
2. Clothing for a man who needs more expensive, large sizes (he is paying for over half of the clothes himself).
3. Start-up groceries, kitchen utensils, phones and clothing for ten people who have gotten out of CDOC this calendar year.
4. Cost of gasoline and car depreciation because of travel (both local and to other parts of Colorado) for numerous people facing revocation hearings or re-sentencing’s.
5. Stamps for four mailings, ranging from 70 the first mailing of this year, to almost 200 for this newsletter. Cost of stamps for J-pay mailings at an average of 20 or more return letters each month to those of you who are incarcerated.

Our coffers are getting low! We need your assistance, and hope to have our 501C (3) soon for tax deductions. Donate on our website or to: CSOR, P.O. Box 27051, Denver, Co. 80227 Attn: Susan



Christmas/Holiday Greeting

At this blessed time of year, we are grateful for the love of God which is so powerful that it surpasses all of our understanding. I wish every one of you a Blessed Holiday Season. It is my prayer that God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory!