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## MEMO FOR RECORD

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### NEW APPROACH FOR ATSA (Association for the Treatment Of Sexual Abusers)

In a paper released by ATSA Executive Board of Directors on June 23, 2014 called “Eight Things Everyone Should Know about Sexual Abuse and Sexual Offenders”, ATSA appears to take a new policy direction. After explaining its position on a number of issues related to sexual abuse and those who sexually offend, they make this statement near the end of the paper:

“Sexual abuse is a complex issue which impacts everyone – individuals, communities, institutions and society as a whole. Despite this reality, addressing sexual abuse is often viewed only as a criminal justice responsibility; however, due to its widespread impact, preventing sexual abuse is a responsibility of us all. Current responses to sexual abuse typically focus on intervention and prevention after an assault. ATSA joins a growing movement which recognizes and responds to sexual abuse as a public health issue, thus directing our efforts on prevention of sexual abuse before it is perpetrated. Public health approaches also move beyond ensuring the health of individuals, to the health and safety of an entire population. Through education, collaboration, and the involvement of everyone – community members, violence prevention professionals, victim advocates, law enforcement professionals, those who provide treatment to victims/survivors of sexual abuse, and those who provide treatment to persons who have perpetrated sexual abuse – the prevention of sexual abuse can become a reality.”

My only regret is that those who have committed a sexual offense and moved on with their lives positively, and those who advocate for fairness in laws that affect them, were not included in the list of “everyone” provided by ATSA. While I like their approach, and consider this a bold and important statement that starts to move this field in a better direction, I do not believe that you can leave those who parented, those who mentored, those who offended sexually and survived to live positive lives, out of the educational and collaborative plan! To do so is to eliminate those who are in some ways, the most informed about what works and what doesn’t work, and regarding the major pitfalls present in the current system in place all around the United States. Parents and friends of those who have offended sexually, as well as those who offended themselves, can bring something to the table in this discussion, this educational and collaborative venture, that



no-one else can bring. For, we know the person the professionals think they know, from the time they were born, through their years as a small child, their time as a teen, and as they became at least physical adults.

I commend ATSA on this move, but will be asking them to consider amending their statement to include others in their new approach, namely those of us who fight along the sidelines daily for fair treatment for our family members, reduction in victimization and enhancement of the public's safety.

Sincerely,

**Susan Walker**