

## THE MISSION OF CSOR

A wide range of people have heard the acronym CSOR, which stands for Coalition for Sexual Offense Restoration. If you would like to read the official mission statement, it is on the CSOR Website.

When my son and I sat down to talk about the birth of this new organization a number of years ago, we talked about a lot of different words that might get at what it would be about. While I have heard disparaging comments among some in the sexual offense workplace regarding the word restoration, it is the word that we chose to represent that of which we hope to be a part. The Bible talks about a woman who engaged in adulterous behavior, and states that Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." Whether you share our belief in the Bible or not, forgiveness is a concept that we all understand, along with a person's ability to make wise and good choices for the future in spite of poor ones in the past.

While the focus of this particular non-profit is on restoration of persons who have displayed sexual offending behaviors, we want to work alongside other groups that are more directly involved with those who have suffered victimization, parole and probation officers who are helping to hold those who have offended responsible for their behaviors from a law enforcement perspective, the Department of Corrections, therapists who assist people in identifying and admitting to inappropriate behaviors and others. Our job is to support those professionals who are doing their job well and with the right spirit, to uncover situations where those being restored are treated unfairly, and to lift up those who have fallen as they move forward to rise from their fall! We have all fallen, in fact, more often than we want to admit.

Even those we consider to be in a hero class sometimes behave badly, and justice for them should be no differently applied than it is to those experiencing the system for sexual offending behaviors. I get many hundreds of letters from men at the Colorado Department of Corrections who share with me that they are so heartened by actually receiving a response back from someone they wrote to on the outside that they are hit with a ray of hope that has been missing for a long time. These men and women are looked at and treated as part of the dunghill of society which partially accounts for the suicides and suicide attempts that happen among this population. When they receive a letter from someone, it is like an acknowledgement that they are indeed a human being. I have heard it over and over again.

In spite of the daily news, we continue to assume that all who wear the badge, all who fight in our military, and all who serve on the SOMB, in the courts, as therapists, in parole and probation etc. are good people who are making the world a better place to live. While we here stories of heroes frequently, we all too often hear stories of those in places of prominence and power who have made bad choices and have misbehaved, sometimes in an ongoing fashion.

Powerful committees and boards have lived with secrets for years, knowing that bad decisions have been made that have adversely affected peoples' lives, far beyond what they may deserve. While those who have committed a sexual offense are expected to "fess up" and make the record clear – take responsibility, these people and groups of people choose to cover up long held secrets and turn away from the harm they have caused people who do not deserve the extensive harm caused. Additionally, there is frequently no recourse or way for those non-hero fallen ones to correct the harm they have suffered from the powerful ones, as the majority cannot afford an attorney, or have such serious mental and/or physical health issues that they cannot fight the faulty designations and inappropriate sentences they have suffered.

A good example of this is the news that recently came out regarding a woman who in the 1980's told Psychology Today that 80% of people who sexually offended would re-offend. I remember that number being quoted by two high level people in Colorado, one in the Division of Criminal Justice and the other a treatment provider. The number was given as fact at a meeting I attended many years ago, and was utilized by Justice Kennedy later to make it appear that recidivism rates for those with a sexual offense were abundantly high. Studies from recent years have shown that to be blatantly false. I have never heard an apology from the people who quoted that statistic here in Colorado regarding the fact that they were wrong, and regarding how many people with a sexual offense in their past suffered unduly, partially because of their comments.

CSOR works hard to be a partner with parole and with the Colorado Department of Corrections in supporting people who are coming through the system, and back into the community. We would also like to partner more with probation and the people who work directly with those victimized; however, due to the assumption made by some that because we challenge what appears to be inappropriate behavior by those in positions of power we don't want to work with them, the doors to working together remain barely open. While punishment may need to be a part of corrective action, as the new SOHB Standards and Guidelines state: "Offenders are capable of change." They also talk about the importance of positive reinforcements as they are deemed appropriate.

I hear stories daily regarding men who have been verbally beaten down by the professionals working with them. Perhaps verbal "beatings" are needed at times, but it is my opinion that positive reminders about thinking things through before you act may be needed in some cases, rather than a 25 to 30 minute verbal beating. While "probation or parole bashing" as I have heard it called is not appropriate, the delineation of wrong behaviors, especially those that appear to be continuous, is crucial. When it is necessary for me to try to identify whether someone went too far in the way that they interacted with a client, I try to do it in a way that works with, and not against the system. Much of the time that works for the case at hand; it is not my job to attempt to reform the system as a whole. Our focus at CSOR continues to be on pursuing this avenues of action that assist the person with the sexual offending background with his or her own personal restoration!