



# CSOR

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

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**Colorado Department of Corrections Executive Director Dean Williams  
and his presentation and question session with CSOR March 2019  
Susan Walker (Notes from Tami Floyd)**

I was recently “called out” on an important issue. One of you wrote to me and stated that I had promised to review in the June Newsletter, the March CSOR Meeting with Executive Director Dean Williams. Apparently, I neglected to do that, and someone noticed! I am here to try to make up for that major oversight in this, the September Newsletter.

There was a “sell-out” crowd present to meet Director Williams. I had met with him in his office in February and asked him at that time if he could speak and answer questions at our March Meeting. Below see the significant questions and thoughts that came out of that meeting. I am including only first names to preserve some semblance of anonymity.

Jaime from the Brain Injury Ass’n. asked: Are there any plans to implement BI screening at all of the facilities? There was no definitive answer to this question.

Carrie said her husband is in on a 2 – Life sentence (12 years now) and can’t pass polygraphs due to severe Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Dean said he is keenly aware of issues with waitlist to get into treatment, polygraph issues, and being sent back for technical violations and is looking into all of this. He is looking into more of a management/helping path as an option. (Assumption is that this will be more defined as time passes).

Skip has been out three years and successfully completed treatment. He is concerned that there is no common protocol in place with treatment providers. They are all over the place with the way they do things and there is no consistency.

Mark has been out of prison and doing advocacy work for ten years now. From what he has seen, a most difficult thing is that institutional cultural shift needs to happen. “Cultures” are so very different between all of those involved with persons that have committed a sexual offense. How can we get a culture shift to happen? Dean states that he just met with the Attorney General about how you change ideas on the way they are training people in the system. When you are sending 200 per month from prison into community corrections system and 40% are going back to prison on technical violations, that is a problem, and something is not being done right. He is looking at re-defining what incarceration means. He mentioned a program in Alaska where prisoners were working, living “outside” the walls in a seafood processing plant for 2 years prior to being released. This gave a whole new trajectory in re-entry. He has a white paper, “Take 2” out on this idea/concept. Incremental change to see how they do so we know what we can do. This is like the “progression model” in Norway. Mark also mentioned that most of the positive reforms that come out specifically exclude those that have committed a sexual offense.

Dean states: We have to remove the Scarlet S. This is very hard and takes some strong political will to change. There is a moment in time where doors can open. Dean wants top three items that are more punitive vs. helpful from Mark and Skip.

Dean states that SOTMP Programs have a very large backlog for treatment inside. It is costing \$44 million per year for those on the waitlist to stay inside. Dean states it is not necessarily in his control, but he does see it as a big problem and he can possibly have some influence with the information.

Roger wanted to make sure and reiterate how important it is to change the terminology in how we refer to those with a sexual offense in their background. We need to refer to them as a person that has committed a sexual offense, or a person convicted of committing a sexual offense. We should not call them, nor should they call themselves, "sex offenders."

Rene was the first person to get a life sentence in 1999. She got 5 – life. She did ten years of SOTMP and had to repeat the "book" three times. Then at year 14 when she got out, she had to do four more years of treatment outside. Why is this happening when so many are on the waitlist?

Laurie had ideas for a couple of things that Dean might be able to do something about: 1) Parole Conditioning – make sure they make sense for the situation; 2) Allowing PIO's to attend and speak at the legislative hearings. Dean asked Laurie to help him by getting information to him about these and other issues. He wants her to bring prominent policy pieces to him to look over. A check-in with Laurie assures me that this is being done.

Dale discussed how SB19-143 excludes the SO population.

April, a criminal defense attorney has a client in prison who has had his parole period changed 3 times for no reason. It went from 3 years to 10 years to life. She sees this over and over again. Dean wants more detail offline from April to look into this issue. Maybe a white paper to put in front of the attorney general for evaluation.

Paul spent 42 years in prison and is concerned with the re-entry process. He had a very difficult time adjusting when he got out and no-one to help. He started a mentoring program that has grown from him alone to now 20 volunteers and they help as much as they can with those being released. Dean strongly supports this. He wants to see this type of service get bigger and better. He talked about the "import model" (Norway) where people from the outside come inside to help. "This is an area where state should do less and community more." The goal is to have more of us (community) and less of them (doc/state) doing the re-entry.

He asked us to please stay engaged with him and come to him with suggestions of what needs to be changed/done.

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Footnote: Advocates for Change had Dean Williams as their guest in late July. Again, a packed house, and after a short address regarding his first months on the job in Denver, he took a lot of questions. I am sure that AFC will discuss their meeting in more depth in their next newsletter! I did attend both meetings, just to see what his mind was doing three or four months after our CSOR meeting. He made it clear that he had to be careful not to "get ahead of the Governor". Politics is alive and well, and he does have to be concerned about that!

My thanks to Tami Floyd, CSOR Board Member, for her fantastic notes which enabled the sharing above.

### **Meeting with the Parole Board on July 29, 2019 – Susan Walker**

It was a privilege to meet with the Colorado Board of Parole for the second time this year. Janet Hunsaker, CSOR Board Member and I spent an hour meeting the four new Board Members and visiting with the four ongoing Members whom we already knew. Among the new Members whose names many of our readers may be familiar with are, Michelle Geng, former probation officer in Colorado Springs (one of the nice ones!) who served for the last several years as Adult Standards Coordinator for the Sex Offender Management Board (SOMB), and Jason Guidry, former Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) employee who oversaw the treatment program at the Women's Prison in Denver. We are so pleased at the openness of the Parole Board Chair Kristen Hilkey, in terms of her willingness to work with us and the opportunity to meet as necessary to discuss how we can move clients' parole forward.

Three of the hardest issues that we deal with are, as you can imagine, money, official support and housing. Once someone is “full-boarded”, and if no housing, monetary resources or official support person are immediately available to them, they are often “tabled” for a period of time, until such housing, monetary help and official support person are available. Sometimes we are able to provide housing opportunities, but there is no money available for a down payment, or to hold the apartment until someone gets out of prison. Something that is a big help is that CDOC Parole/Re-entry has begun to assist in *some* situations with the cost of temporary or even permanent housing *initial* costs. When both a deposit and first month’s rent are due, the cost can be totally overwhelming for a person just leaving prison, sometimes after many, many years. If they have no family support, there may be nowhere else to turn. Between helping organizations and Parole-Re-entry in the face of no family or friend support, some can be helped with initial housing costs such as the deposit. As you may know, parole has paid for some time, as it is able, for beds at CrossRoads Shelter (\$60.00 weekly) – CSOR does the same as funds are available.

As we have previously discussed, honorably discharged veterans with determinate sentences (versus indeterminate or life sentences) can frequently come out of prison to CrossRoads Shelter or to the Denver Rescue Mission, and have a bed and some meal support while they are waiting to get help from one of the Volunteers of America’s Veterans’ Administration Programs. This connection can be made fairly quickly – the problem is that sometimes housing availability is not there immediately, even though the potential funding is there. Some of these programs can help with rent and case management for several months, assuming the veteran is moving forward in a satisfactory manner (i.e. job, benefits, treatment, parole). The Parole Board is hesitant, as is Parole, to send those who are suffering from serious physical or cognitive challenges to CrossRoads or the Denver Rescue Mission, fearing that the resources there may not be enough to help them through whatever period is necessary for the Volunteers of America/VA Program to kick in for them.

I continue to testify at revocation hearings with varying degrees of success. The hearing officers, Watters and Casias, frequently are pushing against time barriers, and thus are not always pleased to have anyone besides the parole officer there to testify. Nevertheless, at this point, I have been able to get the parole officer in the Englewood Parole Office where I frequently testify from, to break in to the conversation so that I can speak. I have asked the Parole Board Chair to consider the possibility of addressing the hearing officers to make this whole process a bit easier.

Now that the Parole Board has welcomed two sexual offense specific members to its ranks (Geng and Guidry), we have two people on board that are well familiar with our particular issues and concerns. It is my hope that this may help to ease the parole process over time.

### **An Example of CSOR Testimony at a Parole Revocation Hearing**

I am here today to speak on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_. I know \_\_\_\_\_ through his letters to me over the years and through his family and concerned friends. When \_\_\_\_\_ got out of prison, he was assigned to \_\_\_\_\_ Treatment Program and to Officer \_\_\_\_\_ for Parole in Colorado Springs. His first six months, according to the report cards given by treatment, appeared to go very well.

\_\_\_\_\_ was not allowed by his therapist or parole officer to utilize support from his large family, as his treatment person apparently felt that they were dysfunctional. Both she and the parole officer, according to \_\_\_\_\_, refused to call his family back.

The first six months of treatment progressed reasonably well. \_\_\_\_\_ got good marks for attending class and participating. It was when \_\_\_\_\_ girlfriend was about to deliver their daughter that things seemed to fall apart. \_\_\_\_\_ states that he was told initially he could be present for the birth. His Parole Officer, \_\_\_\_\_, told him later that he wasn’t willing to have to ask the Doctor to make sure that he didn’t rape the baby during the delivery. He was not allowed to attend the birth.

This remark by the Parole Officer will most likely be denied; however, I have heard enough similar remarks from some Parole Officers and some treatment providers to believe that this is truly what he said. \_\_\_\_\_ was finally allowed a week or so after the birth to go with another “peer” at the treatment center to sign the birth certificate. \_\_\_\_\_ told his therapist that it was not right that she (his therapist) informed another peer in the group about his personal affairs. He also later made a comment about her lack of professionalism. This made the therapist so mad that she told him she “wanted to fight him” in group.

\_\_\_\_\_ stated that he would be filling out a complaint with the SOMB (Sex Offender Management Board) and DORA (Department of Regulatory Agencies) against her. She threatened him and said if he did there would be repercussions. It is his and every other client’s right to do this. The above behaviors by “professional” staff at the treatment program and via parole are obviously unacceptable. It seems to me that instead of taking a father of four (one of them a new baby) and putting him back in prison, it would make sense to switch him to another treatment program. He should be given a parole officer who is willing to work with him and with his family as well. His Uncle is well able to support him. It is best for him to stay outside and work, so that he can assist in supporting his children. I have personally had problems trying to work with this therapist and parole officer when I was working with other clients. The ¾’s social worker and 1/4<sup>th</sup> cop piece that Rick Raemisch always told the Legislature should be present in a parole officer seems to be missing in both of them. Research and SOMB Standards and Guidelines state that the empathic approach of the therapist makes all the difference in the world for the client. I am asking for \_\_\_\_\_ to be given another chance at a different treatment program and with an officer who understands that some “social work” needs to be part of the parole and treatment agenda!

Thank you.

Susan Walker

Director, CSOR (Coalition for Sexual Offense Restoration)

*“Accept what is, let go of what was, and have faith in what will be.” - Sonia Ricotti*

### Sexual Offenses and the News

It is interesting and yet disgusting at times, to listen to newscasters tout their non-factual information regarding those who have committed a sexual offense. Channel 7 in Denver seems to be a station that has consistent challenges reporting the facts rather than mistaken beliefs. Reporting a recent escape from a youth facility in Golden, they touted the “fact” that two young men who had gone out a window and slid to the ground via sheets tied together were “sex offenders”. This seemed rather comical to me as the first thoughts in these young mens’ minds were more likely staying out of sight of the police, finding food to eat etc. than immediately sexually assaulting someone. A more recent error cited by a Channel 7 reporter stated that “stranger danger is always a concern”. Perhaps to the uninformed that is true, but in reality it is not.

While we tried to inform Channel 7 of their error, no-one responded that they had received our e-mail.

NARSOL (National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws) created and has put out a great little piece called “By the Numbers”. In a straightforward way, it makes it clear that many public beliefs about sexual offending are dead wrong. Since many readers of this newsletter are not in the Denver area, and a significant number are incarcerated, it seemed to make sense to share the contents of this NARSOL produced piece with all of you. Below are the pertinent facts according to this NARSOL Publication.



- **904,000.** The number of people on U.S. sex offender registries. That’s more than the entire population of San Francisco.
- **95%.** The percent of sexual offenses committed by someone who is NOT on a registry.
- **90%.** The percent of sexual assault victims who knew their attacker prior to assault. “Stranger danger” is largely a myth.
- **23%.** The percent of known contact sexual offenses committed by juveniles.
- **3.5%.** The percent of registrants who are reconvicted of another sexual offense within 3 years. The 3-year recidivism rate for all classes of crime is roughly 67%.
- **0%.** The number of scientific or scholarly studies conclusively demonstrating that sex offender registries make our communities safer.

These great little publications are available from NARSOL for the asking. We always keep some on hand at CSOR, and if you attend our quarterly meetings (next meeting September 4 at 11:30 with the Director of Parole, David Johnson or D.J), you may pick a few up to share. Help spread the truth!

#### NEWS TIDBITS

1. Denver City Council voted on August 5, 2019, to discontinue paying GEO and Core/Civic for half-way house services within the City of Denver. It is believed that the purpose for this action had more to do with getting GEO out of the ICE Detainer Business in the City than it had to do with housing and overseeing people coming out of the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC).

It is already hard enough to get people out of CDOC, as so many scheduled to leave prison have lost all of their family, and thus most if not all of their support. While imperfect as all human institutions are, the half-way houses did provide a way for a fairly small number of incarcerated folks to move on from the prison environment. When the evening started, votes were in favor of keeping the half-way houses going under GEO and Core/Civic. By the time the evening City Council Session was over, the vote was to discontinue the contracts of Core/Civic and GEO. At this time, the City and County of Denver does not appear to have any other plan for keeping the six half-way houses going. By the time you read this, it may be that a new plan is in place – however, at this moment, it does not look as if that will be the case.

***UPDATE: As of 8-9-19, according to National Public Radio, a verbal agreement had been reached for at least temporary services to continue between the City and County of Denver and Core/Civic and GEO. More news to come as it is available.***

2. CST's (Community Supervision Teams) are not always what they are supposed to be. Just like in the song from Oklahoma, "Territory folks should stick together; territory folks should all be pals. Cowboys dance with the farmer's daughters; farmers dance with the rancher's gals! CST's should talk to each other on a regular basis! A recent situation of interest grew out of one of the therapeutic programs here in the Denver area. One of the program's therapists told a client she did not want to make a decision about something until the person had talked with the parole officer about it. No other instructions were given. The client talked with the parole officer and got an okay to move ahead with the request, stating that she, the officer, was fine with it. The client went ahead and participated in the activity, and was then placed on a "contract" by her therapist, and was accused by the therapist of "splitting her CST."

My question is: who split the CST? It wasn't the client. She talked to her officer as she was instructed. Because of the absolute power held by the CST's, there is really no way to challenge this. The parole officer stated that she could "trump" the therapist, and the therapist loudly stated to the client that it was not true. Even important people like therapists and parole officers respond poorly, and blaming the client for "splitting the CST" does nothing to make matters better. As usual, the client bears the brunt of the CST members not being adult enough to work together as the Standards and Guidelines say they "shall" if it pertains to the client and they "should" if it pertains to the parole or probation officer. Lots of room to wallow around in them "thar" words in my humble opinion.

3. Members of WAR (Women Against the Registry) attended the SMART Conference in Chicago recently (SMART is the national office that administers the Adam Walsh Act/Registry). Their purpose was not to be disruptive, but to make a point that the best research of today overwhelmingly states that the registry does NOTHING to keep the public/children safe. Besides WAR, people from numerous other organizations joined in as well to add their names to the list of people who believe that the SMART Office is anything but smart! As a wise person once told me, legislators (at the state and national level) tend not to base their laws on research or evidence-based practice, but on public reaction and their ability to keep, or not keep their legislative seats! Unfortunately, this is all too true.

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*I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed. – Michael Jordan*

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