



CSOR

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

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SOMB (Sex Offender Management Board) Legislative Audit Audacities!

This legislatively mandated board that expects pretty close to perfection from the men and women who must satisfy the requirements of the Board's Standards and Guidelines, clearly does not expect the same perfection as it pertains to its own work! Thanks to advocate Dale Jenkins, the imperfections of the SOMB have been clearly delineated via this legislative audit. It was noted that the same problems present in the Board's performance during the last 5 years were also highlighted in a board audit during 2015. Men and women under the tutelage (treatment regimen) of the SOMB would have gone back to prison or have been terminated from treatment in the Department of Corrections given such poor performance on their part (and many have). Sadly, if this audit had not happened, this unacceptable behavior would surely have gone on for many more years. It is crucial that the Sex Offender Management Board, as long as it is in existence, set an example by following the law as written in statute related to its work as part of the Department of Public Safety!

The following paragraphs came from the Office of the State Auditor on July 28, 2020. This summary gives a clear picture of the deficiencies that were brought to the Board's attention in this process. I am quoting this message FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE FROM THE STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE.

"AUDIT FINDS DEFICIENCIES IN HOW SEX OFFENDER MANAGEMENT BOARD CARRIES OUT STATUTORY DUTIES."

"DENVER – The Office of the State Auditor (OSA) has released its performance audit of the 25-member Sex Offender Management Board (Board) at the Department of Public Safety (Department).

The Board is not meeting its statutory charge to provide evidence-based standards for the evaluation, identification, treatment, management, and monitoring of Colorado's 24,000 registered sex offenders. Specifically, of the Board's 381 subsections of standards on evaluating, identifying, and treating offenders, only 18 percent in the Adult Standards and 11 percent in the Juvenile Standards cited supporting evidence.

The audit also found problems with how the Board identifies and mitigates conflicts of interest among its members, identifying nine members who had actual conflicts or situations that created the appearance of a conflict that were not disclosed and did not prevent the members from performing official actions. For example, three members approved providers in 2018 working at the same business in which the members were owners, directors, or officers. Another member – the director of a private agency awarded a \$3.5 million contract by the State for mental health therapy services for sex offenders – voted to change standards that applied to their agency.

Further, the Board did not verify that 13 service provider applicants, out of a sample of 18, met requirements related to references, competency in professional standards and ethics, training and competency to serve offenders with developmental/intellectual disabilities or juvenile offenders.

The Board also took no action on four complaints against providers submitted during the audit period. These complaints all met the Board’s criteria requiring review and investigation.

The audit was performed in response to a legislative request and makes six recommendations to improve Board transparency and accountability, and provider oversight.”

You can be sure that we will be on this issue persistently and consistently. Not having evidence – based Standards and Guidelines allows practices that should have been severely tailored or completely discarded in the most recent re-write of the Standards and Guidelines over the last several years. The efficacy of the polygraph was supported by the “good old boy” network in Colorado i.e. the way we have always done it, versus showing via research its merits for anything except shaming, taunting, and pushing people to admit things they may or may not have actually done. The cottage industries that have sprung up since the days of “no known cure” do not want to go away – thus they hang on to the practices that have kept the industry going, keeping people in treatment and taking polygraphs and other expensive tests as long as possible, at their own expense if they “fail”.

CSOR Board Meeting at Susan’s House
(notice social distancing)!



Welcome to the Hope of Christ, But Not Welcome in Church?

A recent article in Christianity Today has the following title: Sex Offenders Can Find Hope in Christ But Not Necessarily a Place at Church - The article shares anecdotal information from a variety of states and churches regarding this issue, but does not examine any of the excellent research and encouraging statistics that are available today.

The article, while mentioning that some peoples' hearts may be more honest and softer than others, does not even mention Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR), which has extremely solid research behind it and is the preferred criminological method in today's prisons and jails. Risk means that each individual has a different level of risk to commit another offense; each also has specific criminal needs that should be addressed in treatment and supervision (need); individuals also have different levels of ability and background to support how they respond to treatment and supervision due to language skills, nationality, brain injury, general intellectual challenges, childhood trauma, early death of parents or other caregivers, religious beliefs, and so on (responsivity). There are not perfect, but excellent assessments that allow clinicians to identify risk levels for people in treatment and under supervision after a sexual offense which is a vast improvement over guessing who may re-offend. The days of "no known cure" are gone.

Interesting statistics from NARSOL (National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws) reveal the following: 95% of sexual offenses are committed by someone who is not on a sexual offense registry; 90% of sexual assault victims knew their attacker prior to assault – Stranger Danger is largely a myth; 3.5% is the percentage of registrants who are reconvicted of a sexual offense within 3 years. The 3-year recidivism rate for all classes of crime is roughly 67%; there are 0 scientific or scholarly studies that conclusively demonstrate that sex offense registries make our communities safer; 23% of known contact sexual offenses are committed by juveniles.

Because I took issue with this article, I wrote a response to it which challenges their suggestion that the church doors ought to be closed or very carefully opened to those who have committed a sexual offense. I will be interested in hearing from those of you reading the response as to your thought.

Susan's Response: Once again the Church of Jesus Christ has come out with "guns fully loaded", failing to first explore the full story. Here is some food for thought. According to the victims and their advocates, 80% of people out there committing sexual offenses have not been caught or convicted. We read about them just about every day in our local papers and hear about them almost daily on television news. They are cops, pastors, priests, uncles, fathers, teachers, coaches, judges, actors, and we could go on and on. Many of these are offending against people under the age of 18, thus those considered to be children.

Why don't we know who these people are? It is because children do not tell on people they love, at least not quickly or easily. To a child or young person under 18, losing someone they love is an unbearable thought and many teens and younger who have this experience may truly believe that they are in love with the coach or teacher who is coming on to them. Even worse, some may be offended against by their own parent(s).

Why aren't we doing more to foster prevention? All of our public safety money is being spent on the 20% of men and women who have been caught and convicted, who have experienced way too many years of treatment and supervision and have likewise been harassed by neighbors, kept out of good jobs, denied decent places to live, or worse, have ended up on the streets and homeless. We are likely sitting in pews or chairs at church next to significant numbers of people who have sexually offended but who have never been caught and convicted. How do we fix that?

Even the very small percentage of people diagnosed with pedophilia (under 5%) would love, in many cases, to have a chance to be treated and counselled re: their urges without the added agony of spending years in prison and on post-prison supervision for something they felt guilty about doing in the first place. In Germany, buses advertise the opportunity to receive counsel and support without involvement of law enforcement.

The sexual offense population has the lowest recidivism rate of any felony offense except murder. I suspect that the reason those who have committed murder have such a low recidivism rate is because of the many years they spend in prison. Only a small percentage of people who have committed a sexual offense go back to prison for another sexual offense. It is people with drug and alcohol, drunk driving or commission of other crimes while high or drunk – theft, burglary, larceny etc. that go back to prison where recidivism can be as high as 50 – 60 %.

Let's start worrying about pastors, priests, teachers who will never be found out, and give the men and women who have been through 15 – 20 years in prison and 5 – 10 years in treatment (more if you look at the never-ending civil commitment facilities) a chance to show they have changed. "Sexual offending" is not a disease and all people who have committed a sexual offense are not the same. You cannot put them all in one basket. Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR), a well-researched approach to working with this group of people, talks about the different levels of risk, different levels of criminogenic need, and ability to respond to treatment present in the population of those folks who have been caught and convicted and who have experienced years of treatment and supervision. They are not all the same. Each has a different level of risk to re-offend – some have risk levels lower than that for the general public, a public that includes all of us!

I would hope and pray for a chance to do a follow up article to what you wrote in Christianity Today, that may make the picture a lot more clear, IF folks are willing to listen and learn in this particular arena. By the way, we who advocate for these men and women do not call them "sex offenders". We do, however, identify them when necessary, as persons who at one time, committed a sexual offense. It's kind of like the words of Jesus who said "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more". Sinners are people who are "saved by grace".

*The Church is not a gallery for the better exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones.
- Henry Ward Beecher*

Waiting to Get Out AND Going Back on Technical Violations

I wish that all we were doing was very quickly finding enough apartments for everyone at affordable prices. I also wish that what we do find were all stellar places to live, no bugs, no crime, no drugs etc. Currently, CSOR is working actively with over 50 men (and many of their families) to find them a place either alone or with a roommate, to encourage their families (if they have any family left) to collect money from a myriad of family members to help with resettlement on the outside, and finding unique ways to identify properties as yet unidentified by us as possible living places for all of you. Another 50 are in "wait" notebooks as they are not quite ready to come out of prison yet for various reasons.

All of this, unfortunately, takes time, immense effort and a careful following of your march from someone in prison to someone full boarded, and eventually tabled for release to the community upon finding housing. We understand totally that you have been waiting a long time for this status – eg. being ready to leave prison, but there are obstacles that stand in our way of getting you a place to live.

1. If you have no money and no family or friends on the outside, we must try to raise the money for you to get out – i.e. to pay the deposit so that our landlords will hold the apartments for you over the sometimes lengthy time frame that exists between the work of your case manager, the parole department, and the Colorado Board of Parole. It takes sometimes at least a couple of months, once you are done with treatment or you reach your MRD, to get any property that we find for you in the hands of your case manager, for them to get it to the parole department for confirmation that it is an okay place or you to live, and then from the case manager again to the Parole Board for their final blessing in terms of an out date. We have no control at CSOR over the length of time it takes parole and the Parole Board to do their part of the work, or over the case manager completing their work.

I am sure that you worry that if you don't call or write us constantly, remind family to call or e-mail or write us constantly, that we will forget about you. Jan Hunsaker keeps very careful track of who we are helping, and where we are in the process. While we love hearing from you and your families, sending multiple letters before we have been able to answer the ones you had already sent, or having your family call us several times a week actually slows us down, instead of speeding us up! We are so excited when you finally get out, and we want that to happen as quickly as possible for everyone. The truth is that I, especially, am constantly working on all kinds of other projects in terms of advising a variety of people in the community about tons of issues they have contacted me about via e-mail, phone and letter, having nothing to do with getting out. I hope you will keep that in mind as we continue to work very hard to get you on the outside.

2. While you are all chomping at the bit to get out, which we understand, some of your former friends at DOC were and are making bad decisions here on the outside, either following or not following parole directives and treatment safety plans. They decide to drink, use drugs from marijuana to meth, hang around a park for whatever reason, have an unapproved sexual relationship, get a car or Smart phone without CLEAR permission to do etc. During the pandemic, DOC/parole is trying to find alternatives to sending people back to prison, especially on technical violations, but going to jail for five or six months or longer is no fun either. So, while you are chomping at the bit to get out, PLEASE remember that to stay out you need to be very diligent regarding your choices which can result in inappropriate behaviors and your return to "lock-up" of some kind. How sad it makes us feel when we hear of really "stupid" decisions people have made that cause them to lose their apartment, lose their place in treatment, and lose everything they have accumulated since they got out. We know you can do this and do it right!

"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are." — Roy Disney

NEWS TIDBITS

1. It was my great joy to be awarded the 2020 Advocate of the Year Award by NARSOL (National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws). I was at the house of two of our CSOR Board Members watching the "Zoom" Conference put on by NARSOL (in place of the regular "in person" conference cancelled due to the pandemic), when a couple of new folks showed up at the house that hadn't been there earlier. I asked them what they were doing there and they were very vague regarding my question. As we watched the Conference, all of a sudden, someone from NARSOL was announcing the award mentioned above, and that it was being awarded to me! What a surprise and how fun that was. A few days later, I received a beautiful wooden, engraved wall hanging which is now placed above the desk in my office here at the house! I was deeply honored and surprised as you can imagine!

2. Housing issues continue to take a huge chunk of my time, as well as the time of Jan Hunsaker who works alongside me to see that those of you eligible to get out of prison have a place to live, and as well have at least some of the things you need for your apartment. If you have family on the outside, we have most likely talked with them a number of times. One of the things that family and friends can frequently help with is the cost of getting you out to an "approved address". Some men are blessed to have Old Age Pension, Veterans' dollars once they hit the ground, or inheritances (not too many but some). We have been getting to know a lot of the case managers across the Colorado Department of Corrections as we try to move those of you who are ready closer to the outside. It is a long process and includes: staying in touch with your case manager; raising or finding the money for your deposit and first month's rent; fielding numerous phone calls and e-mails from your families, friends and case managers, informing the Parole Board that we are helping you before you go to your parole hearing and letting them know if we are "an official support person" for you (indeterminately sentenced people only); explaining to your family and other support why it takes so long to get people out (i.e. see one parole board person and hopefully get "full boarded"; see the full board 6 – 8 weeks later and hopefully get tabled" for parole upon finding housing; inform case manager that housing has been found; case manager then informs the parole liaison at the facility who informs parole on the outside and who over a certain time period, checks out the address to make sure it is acceptable; case manager is informed, and then sends that information to the Parole Board members who can usually get you actually out the door within 10 – 14 days from that time! Be patient with us! We are doing the best we can!

3. Susan and Jan met on August 10th with Parole (i.e. Ruth Coffman), new Deputy Executive Director over Parole Operations, David Johnson, Director of Parole, Jessica Bertolas, newly named Manager of Parole Officers who work with our population, Meredith McGrath and Deb Duran to discuss the length of time it takes to get an address okayed once we identify a place for someone to live and put money down to hold it. Besides learning that parole's new name for "our unit" is Specialized Supervision Unit instead of "Sex Offender Unit" (yea! First person language), we were also able to strike an agreement that for men and women who are scheduled to go into housing already occupied by our folks, it will not be necessary for a parole officer to visit, check out and okay the property by going out to visit it. This will cut a significant amount of time off the turnaround for getting out and allow case managers to move forward more quickly in terms of getting an address to the Parole Board for an out date.

4. These are challenging times for all of us. After my trip to Grand Junction on Wednesday to pick up "D.C." from Fremont and take him to his apartment there, AND my return trip to Denver (each trip took about eight hours), I was BEAT! It was beautiful scenery over Monarch Pass and going by the Blue Mesa, but constant phone calls all the time I was there, and on the way home. I was hesitant to answer the phone and did not due to safety concerns as I traveled around curves and up and down mountains. The phone calls I didn't answer on the way back because of dangerous driving situations, all came in bright and early Friday morning. I know that I am appreciated and needed, but please be aware that there is only SO MUCH that Jan and I can do each day to be helpful to you. We are working hard with the case managers of those of you that are getting out soon. We frequently have to wait for the "perfect storm" to come together in terms of a roommate for you, an available apartment and most importantly, the money needed to get you in the door. Also waiting for the Case Manager, the Department of Parole and the Parole Board to do their necessary work for each person requires patience from us AND from you. If you do not hear back from me via letter, it is because I have a huge stack of letters to answer - some of you have written me three or four times and your families have called me three or four times (or more). We will greatly appreciate your patience as we work to get as many of you out as we can as quickly as possible.



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