

Advocate

OFFICE OF CRIME VICTIMS ADVOCACY
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Serving as a voice within state government for crime victims and their families

JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS

Sex offenders are increasingly a part of our public debate – and juvenile sex offenders pose particularly difficult questions for us. One in five arrests for sex offenses involve juvenile suspects. ¹

As with rape myths in general, there are many common misconceptions about juvenile sex offenders' history and behavior. Additionally, the frustrating reality is that research about adult sex offenders and their treatment is a relatively new field – and research on juveniles is even more limited.

Advocates are in a unique position to understand the realities behind the headlines. It is important that we share what information we do have with survivors, their families and our communities – and that we keep up with new research as it is released.

We know that the age of first victimization is under 18 for a majority of survivors -- and a significant portion of victims experiencing a first assault before the age of 12. ² It is less well known that thirty-seven percent of juvenile victims were assaulted by another juvenile. For victims under five, the number of juvenile offenders is even higher -- 47 percent.

Sexual assault by adolescents is sometimes incorrectly assumed to be primarily "statutory rape." (Of course, Washington State law does not include the crime of statutory rape, instead determining Rape of Child by degrees related to

the age difference between victim and offender.) National statistics show that statutory rape cases most often involve an adult offender, not a juvenile boyfriend. In 82 percent of statutory rapes, offenders against young female victims were 18 or older. ³ For victims under age 14, 68 percent of offenders were adults. It is important to educate our communities about the nature of sex offenses committed by juveniles.

We also know that most assaults are carried out by someone known to the victim. Younger victims are more likely to be assaulted by a family member. In fifty-six percent of assaults against

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victims under five, the offender was a family member.⁴ Researchers tell us that the level of force used by an offender may increase with the victim's age – so juvenile offenders more often use coercion than force with younger victims.

A history of sexual abuse does not indicate that a child or adolescent will become a sex offender. In fact, "most adolescent sex offenders have not been victims of childhood sexual abuse."⁵ However, juvenile offenders (as well as adult offenders) often have a history of other negative childhood experiences such as physical abuse, neglect and witnessing violence.⁶

Not only will most victims not become offenders, but most juvenile sex offenders will not become adult offenders. The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers states that, "there is little evidence to support the assumption that the majority of juvenile sex offenders are destined to become adult sex offenders."⁷

While we as a society regard offenses against children as more heinous than those against adults, studies indicate that juvenile sex offenders who offend against younger victims may be somewhat less dangerous in the future. "Adolescents who offend against younger

children tend to have slightly lower sexual recidivism rates than adolescents who sexually offend against other teens."⁸

Juveniles differ from adult sex offenders in key ways. Juvenile sex offenders tend to have a "significantly lower frequency of more extreme forms of sexual aggression, fantasy, and compulsivity."⁹ The research that has been done so far indicates that the majority of juvenile sex offender cases involve curiosity and lack of supervision. There are two other small groups of offenders who have general delinquency or anti-social behaviors, or emerging paraphilia (deviant sexual arousal). Many juvenile sexual offenders also engage in other delinquent and criminal behavior that is not sexual in nature.

Juveniles are believed to respond well to treatment. "Evidence suggests that the vast majority of juvenile sexual offenders respond well to treatment and do not recidivate."¹⁰ When they do, their rate of recidivism for non-sexual crimes is higher than for sexual offenses. As with adults, the assessment of juveniles for risk or treatment should emphasize objective, actuarial data over more subjective clinical judgment.

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TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS

Term	Age range	Context
Juvenile Sex Offenders	13-17	Treatment & Criminal
Adolescent Sex Offenders	13-17	Treatment & Criminal
Children with Sexual Behavior Problems	Under 11	Treatment
Sexually Aggressive Youth	Under 14	DSHS funding for treatment

(Juvenile Sex Offenders, continued from page 2)

In recent years Washington state and the nation as a whole have struggled with a number of issues relating to juvenile sex offenders including lifetime registration, trial in adult courts, school notification, and re-integration with family and community (see article on the Juvenile Sex Offender Work Group on page 4).

Treatment providers and researchers urge caution in making sweeping policy changes that treat juveniles as adults. Juvenile sex offenders are a mixed group. Some will respond very well to intervention and treatment, while responding poorly to isolation and stigmatization.

There is much we do not know with certainty about juvenile sex offenders. And as we wait for the evidence to come in, regardless of its conclusions, it is crucial to bear in mind that "risk of re-offense" is a measure relevant to the

offender and the community, but not to the victim's sense of threat. An offender might pose a low risk of re-offense, and yet his placement back in the same home as a victim may result in further trauma for the victim. Advocates must bring the needs of the victim to the table as placement and management decisions are made.

End Notes

¹Juvenile Arrests 2002, page 4

²Drawn from OCVA's incidence survey, these figures are also found nationwide: 72% of violent crimes against juvenile females were sexual assaults. Victims under 12 were 47% of juvenile sexual assault victims. (NIBRS data reported in Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report. Page 31)

³Juvenile Offenders & Victims: 2006 Annual Report, page 37

⁴Ibid. Page 33

⁵NCSBY Fact Sheet

⁶Juvenile who have sexually offended: A Review of the Professional Literature, page 4

⁷Statement of the ATSA Executive Board 2000

⁸NCSBY Fact Sheet

⁹ATSA Executive Board 2000

¹⁰Ibid.

"We're Back!"

After canceling the 2006 OCVA conference, we missed you and are anxious to renew the fall tradition with a return of the OCVA conference in 2007. The conference will be held at the Yakima Convention Center, September 17 through 19.

We are changing the format a little bit, as you will note by the dates. We are going to run a little shorter this year and have individual workshops go a little longer. There will be 3-hour blocks, which will allow more in-depth discussion and learning. We will also be hosting specific networking and consultation time throughout the conference.

The conference will be divided into four "tracks." Those tracks are Advocacy, Therapy, Technology, and Leadership/Program Development. While people are welcome to jump back and forth between tracks, depending on your interests, each track is designed to meet specific needs and provide topics of interest and relevance to the group.

Please watch for save the date cards and future information regarding the conference.

JUVENILE SEX OFFENDER WORK GROUP

Background

Over the past three years, the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration of DSHS, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy have led a collaborative effort involving a workgroup of stakeholders addressing two significant issues shared by juvenile sex offenders and their minor victims:

- **Juvenile sex offenders potentially return to the home in which their sibling victim resides.**

This can put parents in an untenable position if the return of a sex offender to the home would result in risk to siblings. Parents can find themselves in the position of having to place the offending youth or the minor child outside of the home. This is not the best approach to either help the juvenile sex offender succeed, assist and support parents in their efforts to parent all their children, or help and support the child victim.

- **During the course of treatment, juvenile sex offenders reveal additional victims.**

While the disclosure of the majority of additional victims does not include enough information to find them, sometimes there is enough information to know who they are. The task is to develop a process for notifying those parents that their child may have been a victim of a sexual assault and to offer appropriate assistance and support to them and their child.

The work group initially met together over several months. As members presented information about how their particular part of the system worked, as well as challenges and observations. The entire group developed a richer sense of the juvenile justice system, juvenile sex offenders, as well as services for victims of sexual assault. Upon this new

understanding and appreciation for role, purpose, and goals, the work group was able to develop the following five objectives and outcomes.

1) Support for families of juvenile sex offenders from adjudication to the end of supervision

Outcome: Families play an active role in planning for the transition of the offender child back to the home, and sibling victims of juvenile sex offenders are supported with increased services

2) Transitional placement assistance for families requiring additional services before a juvenile sex offender can return to a home with a sibling/child victim

Outcome: Transitional placement with defined eligibility criteria is available for juvenile sex offenders with sibling/child victims who are unable to reside with their families at point of release; transitional placement includes family focused services with the ultimate goal of family reunification

3) Enhanced funding for services to victims

Outcome: Increased capacity of Community Sexual Assault Programs to serve families with complex issues related to having both victim child and offending child in the family

4) Best practices for treatment for juvenile sex offenders

Outcome: Identification of best practices for treatment of juvenile sex offenders, including treatment and supervision strategies for juvenile sex offenders living in the same home as child victims; recommendations of minimum standards for treatment of juvenile justice system sex offenders

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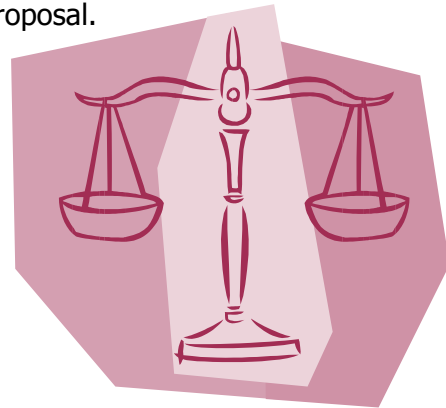
5) Exploration of ways to inform newly disclosed victims

Outcome: Increased capacity to identify, notify, and provide services to victims disclosed by juvenile sex offenders

In the Fall of 2006, additional individuals came to the group yielding a richer conversation in which ideas were developed and expanded. We were able to review data from JRA, local communities, and other parts of the various systems that have responsibility for juvenile sex offenders. From this second development phase, we expanded the realm of interest to include juvenile sex offenders who may be in SSODA (Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative) and other community alternatives to JRA. We also realized that any juvenile sex offender returning to any home or living

situation would still and always be part of their family of origin and so support and services to all these families is important.

The group envisions a set of recommendations and suggested service models. A legislative proposal is being developed that would set the course for further work and the development of specific guidelines, service models and evaluation to realize the proposed objectives. Watch OCVA legislative reports for updates on this proposal.



WASHINGTON VICTIM ASSISTANCE TRAINING ACADEMY

A Training Academy is being developed by OCVA, in collaboration with Families and Friends of Violent Crime Victims, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Washington Coalition of Crime Victim Advocates, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and the Washington Criminal Justice Training Commission. Central Washington University is our academic partner.

As the recipient of a federal grant through the Office for Victims of Crime, we have been creating a 40-hour training curriculum for advocates providing services to victims of crime. The grant provides funds for 3 years. The first year is devoted to planning; the second year requires the implementation of the academy; and the third year decreases federal funds but provides some support for the second academy and requires plans for sustaining the effort once federal funds are no longer available.

Participants in the Washington Academy will be from a mix of community-based and system-based programs, as well as a mix of agencies providing services to the wide variety of crime types impacting people. The academy is a 40-hour, on-site curriculum and process, designed to emphasize experiential learning and practice.

The first Washington Academy will be held at Campbell's Resort (Lake Chelan) April 29 through May 3, 2007. Space will be limited to approximately 40 slots available for participants, so there will be an application process. Stay tuned for more information to be part of the first class of the Washington Academy.

It is also important to note that the Academy is intended to supplement, not replace, the important training provided by Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and others. All current training requirements of your various contracts remain in place.

INFORMATION

The Office of Crime Victims Advocacy serves as a voice within state government for the needs of crime victims in Washington State.

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Did You Know? WASHINGTON'S INFONET SYSTEM

On July 1, 2006, OCVA and DSHS Children's Administration launched the Washington InfoNet system. InfoNet is a web-based data collection system for victim service providers. OCVA and DSHS contractors enter non-personally identifying information about clients and services. So far, 128 victim service agencies are participating in InfoNet, and the results have been outstanding.

In less than six months, InfoNet has received information on over 9,400 domestic violence clients, 3,800 sexual assault clients, and 800 victims of other crimes. In addition, advocates have reported **over 50,000 hours** of direct services provided, as well as a myriad of other valuable information. And those numbers continue to grow every day!

Washington's InfoNet system was based on a similar program used in Illinois. It was built with the help of a dedicated User's Group of victim service providers around the state. The project's next phase will bring the group back to advise OCVA and DSHS on potential changes and upgrades to make the system an even more valuable tool for agencies.

If you would like to know more about the Washington InfoNet system, please contact Nicky Gleason at nickyg@cted.wa.gov.

The OCVA Advocate is a quarterly publication of this Office. Unless otherwise noted, articles were written by OCVA staff. Topic ideas for future issues may be sent to the address below or e-mail ocva@cted.wa.gov.



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