



# JUVENILE JUSTICE

Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance

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## KEY STEPS TO MANAGING JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS

- **Team up.**
- **Meet regularly.**
- **Designate point of contact.**
- **Use technology.**

## JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS: MANAGING AND PREVENTING FUTURE OFFENSES

Juveniles commit a significant portion of the sex offenses that occur in the United States each year. They account for up to one-fifth of rapes and one-half of all cases of child molestation committed annually.<sup>1</sup> In a 2000 study, data collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that 23 percent of sexual assault offenders were under the age of 18.<sup>2</sup> Boys ages 13 to 17 perpetrate most of the sexual crimes committed by juveniles, but recent studies have shown that girls under age 18 and children under age 13 have also committed sexual offenses.<sup>3</sup> Across the country, police officials partnering with other stakeholders have implemented successful programs to manage offenders and prevent future sexual offending by juveniles. This brief describes trends observed in the field and the strategies employed by two law enforcement agencies to manage juvenile sex offenders in their communities.

### The Importance of this Issue for Law Enforcement

Juveniles who commit sex offenses pose unique challenges to the juvenile justice system in general and to law enforcement in particular. The number of juvenile sex crimes have increased, which requires resources to specifically manage this population in the community. For example, law enforcement must follow interview, arrest, and detention procedures that differ from those used with adults. New legislation, such as the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, require that law enforcement create, collect, and maintain separate registration and notification databases for juveniles convicted of sex crimes. These additional procedural and operational challenges are accompanied by shrinking budgets. Focusing on preventative measures that minimize juvenile crime and victimization provides a good return on law enforcement's investment to the community. However, law enforcement officials report that no one agency can do it alone and that such operational challenges require law enforcement to seek external support. One effective way to address this challenging population is to forge partnerships with community stakeholders and work collectively to prevent future victimizations.

<sup>1</sup>University of Virginia, Institute of Law, Psychiatry, & Public Policy, "Understanding Juvenile Sex Offenders: Research Findings and Guidelines for Effective Management and Treatment," by J. A. Hunter, *Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet* (2000).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics," (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000).

<sup>3</sup>University of Virginia, Institute of Law, Psychiatry, & Public Policy, "Understanding Juvenile Sex Offenders: Research Findings and Guidelines for Effective Management and Treatment," by J.A. Hunter, *Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet* (2000).

## Effective Juvenile Sex Offender Management Approaches

This Promising Practices Brief highlights law enforcement-involved programs that demonstrate leading practices in addressing juvenile sex offending. Two programs that have proven helpful employ multi-agency approaches that bring together professionals from across the criminal justice continuum. Program administrators have collected information on the impact of their approach, which anecdotally has shown effectiveness in managing juvenile sex offenders in their communities. The Juvenile Sex Offender Program in Prince William County, Virginia and the Sex Offender Accountability Program in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, use information sharing and collaboration to manage juvenile sex offenders and promote public safety. Their strategies can be applied in other jurisdictions regardless of size and geography. This brief begins with an overview of the issue, describes effective responses, and concludes with an examination of the strategies used in the featured programs.

### Sex Offenses by Juveniles

Information and research on juvenile sex offenders is not prevalent. Much of the statistical information that does exist derives from juvenile self-reports or data collected as part of criminal cases. What is known is that the number of cases involving juvenile sex offenders has dramatically increased in recent years. In 2005, 18 percent of all arrests of persons under age 18 were for sexual offenses (excluding forcible rape and prostitution).<sup>4</sup> While the majority of juvenile sex offenses are committed by males, females under 18 account for approximately seven percent of all arrests for juvenile sex offenses, excluding prostitution.<sup>5</sup> Data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention suggest that juveniles commit one-third of all sexual offenses against children.<sup>6</sup> Supplementary research reveals that most of juvenile sex offenses tend to be coercive or manipulative instead of aggressive or violent.<sup>7</sup> However, up to one-fifth of rapes and one-half of all cases of child molestation committed annually involved a juvenile perpetrator.<sup>8</sup> Treatment providers report that “about half of all adult sex offenders are thought to have initiated their criminal careers during adolescence.”<sup>9</sup> These data emphasize the importance of addressing juvenile sex offenders before they recidivate or commit future offenses.

### Legislative Impacts on Law Enforcement’s Role

Law enforcement’s primary role in managing juvenile sex offenders includes protecting the public from such offenders through their arrest powers. The implementation of state and federal laws that govern the registering, monitoring, supervising, managing, and tracking of sex offenders in general and juvenile sex offenders in particular has altered law enforcement’s role. The Jacob Wetterling Act requires

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, “Ten-Year Arrest Trends by Sex, 1996-2005,” [www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table\\_41.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_41.html), July 5, 2007.

<sup>5</sup>National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth. *Adolescent Sex Offenders: Common Misconceptions vs. Current Evidence*. Fact Sheet. 2003. <http://www.ncsby.org/pages/publications/ASO%20Common%20Misconception%20vs%20Current%20Evidence.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Center for Juvenile Justice, “Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report,” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999).

<sup>7</sup>N. Dickon Reppucci and Lisa C. Trivits, “Application of Megan’s Law to Juveniles,” *American Psychologist*, volume 57, number 9 (2002): 690-704.

<sup>8</sup>University of Virginia, Institute of Law, Psychiatry, & Public Policy, “Understanding Juvenile Sex Offenders: Research Findings and Guidelines for Effective Management and Treatment,” by J. A. Hunter, *Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet* (2000).

<sup>9</sup>Saleh, Fabian M. and Gina M. Vincent, “Juveniles Who Commit Sex Crimes,” *American Psychiatry*. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3882/is\\_200401/ai\\_n9383794?tag=rbxcra.2.a.5](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3882/is_200401/ai_n9383794?tag=rbxcra.2.a.5).

### Legislative Impacts on Law Enforcement's Role (cont'd.)

states to create and maintain sex offender registries. Megan's Law requires public notification of the release of sex offenders. New legislation, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (Walsh Act) requires juvenile offenders age 14 and older who are convicted of serious sex crimes and any juveniles convicted as adults for similar crimes to register with local law enforcement upon their release into the community.

These requirements delegate additional responsibility to law enforcement agencies, and further tax already strained resources within departments. Many jurisdictions have recognized that one effective way to address this unique and challenging population is to implement a multi-agency response.

Multi-agency approaches to the supervision, registration, and treatment of juvenile sex offenders involves strategic coordination and service delivery through partnership among major stakeholders. To work, it is essential that multi-agency programs involve all stakeholders that have a specific role in the management and supervision of juvenile sex offenders in the community. In addition to law enforcement, it is ideal that such programs include:

- **Community corrections** to monitor juvenile sex offenders on active supervision; conduct visits to offenders' homes, schools, and places of work; execute polygraph tests; work with and share relevant information (such as victim history and polygraph results) with appropriate agencies; and track offenders using global positioning satellite (GPS) or electronic monitoring technology.
- **Court officials** such as judges and prosecutors to charge, sentence, and monitor the progress of offenders, and adjust penalties (if necessary) while the offenders are under supervision.
- **Social service agencies** to help monitor juvenile offenders and ensure that their resource needs are met.
- **Victim advocates** representing the perspectives of specific victims or the community at large. Their role can also be to arrange restorative justice meetings between victims and offenders if necessary or mandated.
- **Treatment providers**, if possible, to conduct social, family, psychological, and risk assessments; develop treatment plans; and provide case management services to juvenile sex offenders and their families in consultation with other relevant stakeholders.

### Effective Juvenile Sex Offender Management Approaches

This Brief features law enforcement-involved programs that use a multi-agency approach to:

- Promote offender accountability, reduce crime, and prevent future victims.
- Encourage agencies to pool resources and delegate responsibilities to the agency most capable.

### Effective Juvenile Sex Offender Management Approaches (cont'd.)

- Enhance supervision and case management services.
- Improve formal and informal intelligence gathering, information sharing, and expertise on the juvenile sex offender population.
- Increase capacity for developing solutions to relevant problems.

Representatives for both programs believe the strategies employed are effective in monitoring and preventing future offenses by juvenile sex offenders in their communities.

#### *Prince William County (VA) Juvenile Sex Offender Program*

Prince William County (VA) is a suburb of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. As of June 2008, the population totaled 388,269 residents.<sup>10</sup> The Prince William County Police Department is staffed by approximately 700 full-time personnel that include 517 sworn officers and 184 civilian employees.<sup>11</sup>

The 31st District Juvenile Sex Offender Program in Prince William County is an example of a collaborative community intervention strategy that focuses on supervising and treating juvenile sex offenders referred by the court. Members of the criminal justice community began informally meeting in 1995 to manage sex offenders in the community. Later in 2002, funding was directed and dedicated to using a best practices model to implement a comprehensive system for classifying juvenile sex offenders. This model focuses on public safety and incorporates evaluation tools, treatment methodologies, and behavioral management systems. The primary goals of the Juvenile Sex Offender Program are to:

- Protect the public through a balanced approach of comprehensive services and partnerships with families, schools, community, and criminal justice organizations.
- Reduce juvenile delinquency and recidivism by sex offenders.
- Strengthen collaboration and encourage information sharing between and among all agencies involved.

Major components of the Juvenile Sex Offender Program include information sharing, compliance checks, enhanced supervision, and case management services such as risk assessment and treatment.

The multi-disciplinary team includes the Prince William County police, the Virginia State Police, the sheriff's office, the prosecutor's office, probation and parole, treatment providers, and social service officials. Representatives from these agencies meet monthly to receive updates from the state police on any new legislation pertaining to the sex offender registry; to discuss and share information on police unsolved cases; to discuss ways to educate judges for appropriate sentencing outcomes; and to hear from

<sup>10</sup>Prince William County Standard Data Set. <http://www.pwcgov.org/default.aspx?topic=010012000670000274>, September 16, 2008..

<sup>11</sup>Prince William County Police Department. <http://www.pwcgov.org/docLibrary/PDF/008767.pdf>, September 16, 2008.

### Effective Juvenile Sex Offender Management Approaches (cont'd.)

the local prosecutor about upcoming case strategies (e.g., plea bargains) and any difficulties the prosecutor's office has with cases that have gone to court in the past.

Communication between agencies is the underlying principle of this multi-agency effort. Sex offenders must register with either local law enforcement or the Virginia State Police. If an offender chooses to register locally, the information is transmitted to the state police to update the state sex offender registry. Likewise, probation officers and law enforcement partner to:

- Conduct curfew checks and ensure that offenders are at home, school, or work as scheduled.
- Conduct surveillance of high-risk probationers, including juvenile sex offenders.
- Locate juvenile sex offenders who have absconded from supervision.
- Enforce conditions of supervision as appropriate.

Moreover, patrol officers who may have collateral contacts with juvenile sex offenders under supervision receive information from the Juvenile Sex Offender Program. Both the state and local law enforcement agencies have individuals or units dedicated to processing sex offender data. Program efforts are funded through existing budgets as usual and customary service resources. Specialized services such as risk evaluation and treatment are supported by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice and court services for the county.

Prince William County is home to over 230 registered sex offenders according to community justice officials. Data compiled by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice for fiscal year 2006 indicates that only 2.3 percent of all juveniles charged with a crime in Virginia were placed on probation for sex offenses in Prince William County. In 2007, 19 juveniles were arrested for sex offenses, which increased from the year before. Since its inception, program representatives believe that this program has given citizens the peace of mind to know that the topic is being addressed in their community using the highest levels of law enforcement. Furthermore, law enforcement believe their efforts encompass the "it takes a village" philosophy in guaranteeing that offenders are responsible for their behaviors.

#### *Sex Offender Accountability Program (SOAP)*

Lafourche Parish (LA) is home to approximately 93,554 people and is 60 miles southwest of New Orleans. The Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office (LPSO), the law enforcement entity, is served by approximately 216 sworn deputies. According to LPSO figures, there were five arrests for sexual assault in 2006 and two arrests for sexual assaults in 2007. A general review of Louisiana law requires that juveniles who:

- Plead guilty or have been convicted of sex offenses under the Children's Code shall register with state and local law enforcement as sex offenders.

### Effective Juvenile Sex Offender Management Approaches (cont'd.)

- Relocate to and establish residency in Louisiana must register as sex offenders.
- Are adjudicated as delinquent are exempt from any notification requirements.

Although the sex offense statistics reported by the LPSO are lower than the national average, continuous changes in the law regarding the management of sex offenders has obliged law enforcement to implement proactive strategies to be effective. For example, in Lafourche Parish, law enforcement efforts were hampered by inconsistent and overlapping responsibilities for monitoring and tracking sex offenders. For this reason, the Lafourche Parish sheriff convened a working group to review the laws, identify potential loopholes, and clarify management responsibilities of law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies. This effort resulted in the development of SOAP. The Sex Offender Accountability Program or SOAP serves as an administrative mechanism and proactive sex offender management strategy. SOAP:

- Enhances, improves, and ensures compliance with sex offender registration laws.
- Helps law enforcement identify and apprehend non-compliant sex offenders.
- Provides accurate and readily accessible data to citizens of Lafourche Parish.

SOAP exceeds the traditional approaches to managing sex offenders in the community by emphasizing collaboration, encouraging information sharing with partners to create compatible internal policies, and making a point of understanding the impact sexual offenses have on victims and society at-large. SOAP protocols include:

- Processing, photographing, and fingerprinting sex offenders.
- Obtaining registration fees to offset monitoring costs.
- Creating manual and electronic files on the offender to include their correctional paperwork, court records, criminal history, registration documents, and photo.
- Establishing a schedule of law enforcement officers who will complete address verification checks to include locating offenders at home, updating information, and investigating if an address is not verifiable.
- Partnering, informing, and collaborating with local law enforcement, media outlets, and civic organizations for community outreach and public awareness activities.
- Meeting regularly with the SOAP committee.
- Maintaining a Web page of sex offenders residing in Lafourche Parish.

### Effective Juvenile Sex Offender Management Approaches (cont'd.)

Unlike adult offenders, the photos of juvenile sex offenders are not posted to the LPSO searchable Web site. Moreover, personally-identifiable file information is maintained physically and electronically separate from adult sex offender data. Although the LPSO notifies the school when one of their students have been adjudicated a sex offender, the community at-large is not notified. Parents must pay registration fees, address verifications are made, and compliance checks are regularly conducted.

The working group, which is now formally referred to as the SOAP Committee, includes members of the sheriff's office, district attorney's office, probation and parole, and Safe Haven, a community-based organization that supports battered women and children. The Committee continues to meet quarterly to review changes to federal and state laws and update policies and procedures accordingly. For example, as of January 1, 2008, there have been state level legislative changes concerning the length of time, with whom (work and home locales) sex offenders must register, and how much time they have to register after conviction or relocation. These changes are intended to comply with the Adam Walsh Act and to further ensure public safety.

Both adult and juvenile sex offenders are required to maintain compliance as indicated above. Additionally, offenders must not commit additional crimes. As of May 2006, SOAP leaders report that 283 offenders had registered through the program. Of those, almost half have remained compliant. In 2007, the first and only juvenile sex offender entered the program. Currently this juvenile is in compliance with program and legal requirements. Program administrators believe this individual has been successful in meeting program goals thus far. According to the sheriff, establishing SOAP has resulted in the consolidation of registration, management, supervision, and enforcement responsibilities within one unit of the office. The sheriff advises agencies to develop needs assessments to identify resources that will help fulfill federal and state requirements; to conduct research on associated costs; and to seek grants that may be available to assist with program implementation.

### Summary

Recent legislation and local policies regarding sex offenders have increased law enforcement's operational responsibilities and simultaneously strengthened their abilities to manage juvenile sex offenders in the community. Amid growth in the number of juvenile sex offenders for whom specialized treatment and processing are required, law enforcement has found ways to prevent new victimizations and ensure that already adjudicated juvenile sex offenders do not recidivate. Local law enforcement agencies have implemented multi-agency collaborative programming strategies for managing juvenile sex offenders that has proven effective. A multi-agency collaborative partnership not only give police a cost-effective way to manage juvenile sex offenders, but also enhances and strengthens their resolve to protect public safety. Law enforcement can lead or partner by taking the following steps:

1. Establish regular meetings between law enforcement, community corrections officials, social service officials, prosecutors, and other relevant officials that handle juvenile, child, and sex crimes to share information and strategies.

**Summary (cont'd.)**

2. Designate agency-specific staff to be the internal and external point persons.
3. Implement computerized or electronic systems to collect registration and notification data as legislatively required. This system can be used to track offender contacts with the system and ensure that juveniles who are amenable to treatment receive necessary services.

Both featured programs have implemented policies and procedures creating a continuous loop of communication regarding juvenile sex offenders. These proactive police responses serve to enforce appropriate laws, comply with relevant legislation, and effect change in the community and the sex offender.

**For more information on the Prince William (VA) program, contact:**

First Sergeant John Buttner  
 Prince William County Police Department  
 1 County Complex Court  
 Prince William, VA 22192  
 Phone: 703-792-7228  
 E-mail: jbuttner@pwcgov.org  
 Web site: [http://www.pwcgov.org/default.aspx?topic\\_040069001540001421](http://www.pwcgov.org/default.aspx?topic_040069001540001421)

**For more information on the SOAP program, contact:**

Sergeant Dennis Gordon  
 SOAP Program Coordinator  
 Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office  
 200 Canal Boulevard  
 Thibodaux, LA 70301  
 Phone: 985-449-4490  
 E-mail: dennis-gordon@lpso.net  
 Web site: <http://lpso.net>

**Resources**

The **IACP Sex Offender Management Training and Technical Assistance Center** educates and trains law enforcement on effective sex offender management strategies through sponsorship from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). More information and resources are available on the IACP Web site at

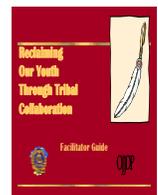
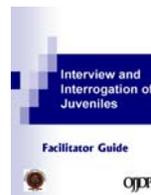
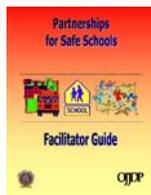
[www.theiacp.org/PublicationsGuides/ResearchCenter/Projects/ViolenceReductionStrategies/SexOffenderManagement/tabid/493/Default.aspx](http://www.theiacp.org/PublicationsGuides/ResearchCenter/Projects/ViolenceReductionStrategies/SexOffenderManagement/tabid/493/Default.aspx)

**Resources (cont'd.)**

The **Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM)** is a national project that supports state and local jurisdictions in the effective management of sex offenders under community supervision. CSOM’s goal is to enhance public safety by preventing further victimization. Visit the CSOM Web site at [www.csom.org](http://www.csom.org) for more information.

The **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)** offers law enforcement powerful resources, free of charge, to help investigate cases of missing and sexually exploited children. Visit the NCMEC Web site at [http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PublicHomeServlet?LanguageCountry=en\\_US](http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PublicHomeServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US) for more information.

The goal of the **National Center on Sexual Behavior of Youth (NCSBY)** is to provide national training and technical assistance to improve the accuracy, accessibility, and strategic use of information about the nature, incidence, prevalence, treatment, reentry, and management of children with sexual behavior problems and adolescent sex offenders. Visit the NCSBY Web site at [www.ncsby.org/](http://www.ncsby.org/) for more information.



The IACP’s **Juvenile Justice Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Program** provides training and technical assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to increase law enforcement’s capacity to minimize juvenile victimization, delinquency, and crime. For more information, contact Stevyn Fogg, Program Manager at:

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