

FACTS

SEX OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

- Most sex offenders engage in "crossover" behavior, i.e., when an offender acts outside of his or her usual deviant sexual interest. An offender may be caught for one type of offense but is at a higher risk to commit another type of offense involving a victim of a different age, gender, or race.
- A study on 143 sex offenders in treatment at the Colorado Department of Corrections who underwent polygraph testing showed that of the convicted rapists, 50% also had child victims, and of the convicted child molesters, 82% also had adult victims. Of those who assaulted non-relatives, 62% also had victims who were relatives (Ahlmeyer, Heil, McKee and English 2000).
- The way sex offenders select victims is often more influenced by opportunity and access than by preference in victim type.
- Research shows that most convicted sex offenders have committed many sexual assaults before they are caught (English et al, 2000).
- Most sex offenders are male. Female offenders account for less than 10% of reported sex offense cases (FBI 2006).

RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS

- Child molesters in Colorado who re-offended sexually did not live closer to schools or daycare centers than those who did not re-offend (Colorado Department of Public Safety, 2004).
- Approximately 22 states and hundreds of municipalities have passed ordinances prohibiting sex offenders from residing close to schools, parks, or other areas where children usually congregate. The State of Colorado does not have such a law, but some local jurisdictions have similar municipal ordinances in place.

- The Minnesota Department of Corrections studied residence restrictions by evaluating 224 sexual offenders who were arrested for a new sex crime and concluded that none of the sex offenses would have likely been deterred by residence restriction. They found that over 65% of the new sex crimes were perpetrated on a victim the offender knew. None of the cases involved an offender who made victim contact near a proximate school, park, or day care center (Minnesota Department of Corrections (2007). Residential Proximity & Sex Offense Recidivism in Minnesota. St. Paul, MN).
- In Iowa, within 6 months of the implementation of the state residence restriction law, thousands of sex offenders became homeless or transient. In addition, the number of sex offenders who did not register and could not be located more than doubled than before the law was enacted (Iowa County Attorneys Association, 2006).

STRANGER DANGER

A 1997 study shows that in 90 percent of sex offenses committed against children less than 12 years old, the child knew the offender (Police-recorded incident data, US DOJ, Bureau of Justice Statistics 1/97). In 2000, that number increased to 93 percent (Dept of Justice, 2000). Additional statistics from these two sources indicate:

- 34.2% were family members and 58.7% were acquaintances.
- Stranger abductions are often reported by the media, because of the rarity in which it occurs (approximately 25% of abductions involve a stranger. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports each year, approximately 115 children were the victims of a "stereotypical" kidnapping by strangers.
- Family kidnappings account for nearly 50% of all child kidnappings.
- Acquaintance kidnappings (done by person(s) known to the family) account for over 25% of all child kidnappings.
- In 90% of the rapes of children who are less than 12 years old, the child knows the offender.

INTERNET EXPLOITATION OF A CHILD

According to the book "Online Victimization of Youth: Five years later", which is written by Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2006):

- Approximately 1 in 7 (13%) youths who use the Internet, receive unwanted sexual solicitations.
- 4% of youth Internet users receive aggressive solicitations in which solicitors made or attempted to make offline contact with the youth.
- 9% of youth Internet users were exposed to distressing sexual material while online.

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

- Community supervision is an alternative to incarceration.
- Most sex offenders in Colorado are supervised by the criminal justice system in the community (probation, parole, and/or community corrections programs).
- Not all offenders will respond positively to treatment, however, some offenders can learn new behaviors and skills and be safely managed in the community.
- Colorado utilizes the containment model to supervise sex offenders. This promotes collaborative supervision amongst a community supervision team including the supervising officer, treatment provider, and polygraph examiner. Also included are other professionals as appropriate (social services, law enforcement, victim representative, etc.).
- Treatment providers use clinical interventions designed to change sexually abusive thoughts and behaviors and help the offender build upon strengths/assets.
- Polygraph examiners help gather a full and accurate history of offenders, concerning their behavior. Polygraph examiners also verify compliance and identify high risk behavior.

- Supervising officers and case managers monitor offender compliance by imposing conditions on their behavior and imposing sanctions when necessary.
- Sex offenders must waive confidentiality for treatment and case management purposes. This ensures communication and prevents secrecy and deception, which may undermine rehabilitation and threaten public safety.
- Sex offenders must be accountable for their behavior. They must often agree to intensive and intrusive measures in order to be supervised effectively in the community and successfully participate in treatment.
- Offender risk and needs are constantly assessed and responded to in order to be managed effectively.

IMPACT ON VICTIMS

- Victims may exhibit many different responses (i.e., crying, angry, quiet, becoming withdrawn). There is no "normal" response.
- Sex assault by someone known to the victim may create a more difficult recovery.
- Victims often develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Long-term effects may include:
 - Depression, anxiety, eating disorders, flashbacks, divorce, loss of sexual interest, loss of concentration, sleeping disorders, and suicide.
- Male victims tend to develop anti-social behavior, whereas females tend to develop depression. Both sexes often develop substance abuse problems.
- Impacts on victims of sexual assault may be minimized when they are believed and supported.

COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

- Sex offenders have the same need for housing and employment as other citizens. When offenders lack stable housing they are often at a higher risk to re-offend.
- A stable offender equals increased community safety (Bumby & Talbot CSOM 2000).
- The community has a vested interest in helping offenders to be successfully managed in the community.
- Harassing an offender is counter-productive to the goals of community management and may cause offenders to go underground and not register.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: The majority of offenders are in prison

FACT: In Colorado, only 16.2% of all felony offenders are sent to prison (Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research, 2006). The rest are placed on probation or Community Corrections.

MYTH: Most sex crimes are reported

FACT: The majority of sex offenders are not caught or detected. Less than 30% of sex assaults are ever reported (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2006), of which only 1% to 10% of child sexual abuse cases are reported. Young victims who know the offender are less likely to report the crime to authorities (Hansen et al, 1999).

MYTH: Sex crimes are not prevalent

FACT: In Colorado, 1 in 4 women, and 1 in 17 men, have been sex assault victims in their lifetime (Colorado Department of Health, 1998).

MYTH: You can "spot" a sex offender

FACT: There is no "typical" sex offender. While their behavior is similar, offenders come from all different ages, races, socioeconomic levels, cultures, etc.

MYTH: Most offenders have a long rap sheet

FACT: Many sex offenders have no documented criminal history.

MYTH: Sex crimes are acts of impulse

FACT: Studies show 75% of sex offenses are carefully planned. (When 3 or more assailants are involved, the number climbs to 90%.) (WebMD Feature March 27, 2000 Berkeley, CA)

MYTH: Sexual assaults occur in dangerous places

FACT: A study conducted in Colorado Department of Corrections indicated 85% of the sex offenders reported having committed the crime at their own residence or at the victim's residence.

MYTH: Most sex crimes are committed by a stranger

FACT: 93% of child sex abuse victims know their abusers. (Dept of Justice, 2000)

MYTH: Most victims "ask" for it

FACT: Sex offenders typically use power and control to dominate victims.

MYTH: Victims who suffer no obvious physical injury are not seriously traumatized by their experience

FACT: Only about 4% of rape victims sustain serious physical injuries as a result of rape. 70% report no physical injuries but all victims are harmed.

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