

Problems posed by predators

Specific treatment vital for sex offenders

By NATALIE FIELEKE
News Tribune

While most experts agree there is no cure for sex offenders, the state of Missouri provides rehabilitation on several levels in an effort to provide long-term behavioral control.

Fred Dudenhoeffer, a private practice licensed professional counselor who specializes in working with sex offenders, stressed the difference between treatment for sex offenders and traditional therapy.

He compared sex offenders' condition to alcoholism.

"It's considered a life-long problem," he said. "That doesn't mean they continue to offend."

The main goal of treatment is to have no more victims, not to cure, he said.

Treatment is not something the majority of offenders would seek out on their own because of the social stigma, Dudenhoeffer said.

Prisoners receive treatment while in correctional facili-



ties, and may receive offense-appropriate treatment during parole.

Special "offense specific" treatment is recommended, not to "coddle" the offender but with the main goal of protecting the victim and the community from future offenses, according to a 2003 U.S. Department of Justice Report "Managing Sex Offenders in the Community: A National
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Monitoring boundaries for sex offenders much easier said than done

By NATALIE FIELEKE
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Although research shows sex offenders benefit from continued behavioral support and surveillance, sometimes keeping track of sex offenders and keeping them up-to-date on current regulations can prove challenging.

Breaks in communication can occur.

According to Department of Corrections regulations, sex offenders always have had to submit an acceptable housing plan to show they were not living close to schools and daycares, said John Fougere, the department's public information officer, but a state law that went into effect on Aug. 28, 2004, codified the distance at 1,000 feet.

"Before the 28th we relied on our policy, which didn't specify a distance," Fougere said. "It specified
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Overview.”

According to the Missouri Department of Corrections, sex offenders must complete specialized treatment before they are released into the community.

By state statute, inmates convicted of a sexual offense must complete the Missouri Sex Offender Program (MOSOP), said John Fougere, the Corrections department's public information officer.

Inmates must complete the MOSOP program offered at Farmington Correctional Center or the Women's Eastern Reception and Diagnostic Center in Vandalia to be eligible for parole, Fougere said.

The program, consisting of 12 months of treatment, education and rehabilitation, follows a cognitive-behavioral model of group therapy, intended to change thinking and behavioral patterns associated with offenders' deviant actions.

“The efficacy of the program is widely-accepted,” said Fougere. “It is a continuity of care starting in the first phase of MOSOP, and on into community treatment that individualized plan is followed.”

According to DOC data, after 10 years those who completed the MOSOP program were shown to be half as likely to return to prison with a new sex offense as prisoners who did not.

Additional programs are intended to prevent the release of untreated sex offenders.

There is not one type of sex offender and the likelihood that one will offend again is based on multiple factors, including age, number of prior sexual convictions and age.

If an offender fails to complete the MOSOP program, and is deemed a violent predator by the court, they might be sent to the Missouri Sexual Offender Treatment Center at Farmington to complete a relapse prevention model, said Richard Gowdy, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist with the Department of Mental Health.

“Typically these are folks who have been unsuccessful in MOSOP,” Gowdy said, noting the court also determines offenders' release from the ongoing program, which is still fairly new.

There currently are about 107 offenders in the center, Gowdy said, and no offender has successfully completed the program and been released since a law established the program in 1999.

According to DOC data, Fougere said, there are about 4,400 sex offenders currently incarcerated, another 3,000 under state supervision and thousands more who no longer are in state jurisdiction because they have completed their sentence.

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