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Special thanks to the PA Sexual Offenders Assessment Board for funding this booklet.

Sexual Offenders Assessment Board
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knowledge leads to empowerment

**Victim Advocates:
Your Guide to Sex Offender Containment Teams**



Healing is a matter of time,
but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.

-Hippocrates

victim advocate

dear colleague,

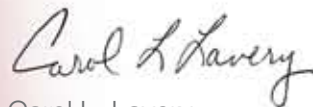
With this booklet, we are introducing a whole new approach to helping victims of sexual violence. This approach, called the victim-centered “Sex Offender Containment Model”, may be a significant change in the way some of you do your advocacy work. It uses a multidisciplinary team approach to working with probation and parole, law enforcement, treatment providers, and others on a Sex Offender Containment Team. As you read the booklet, you will see why we believe this approach can be helpful for victims of sexual violence.

Please keep an open mind as you learn about our new tools – such as, accountability letters and interviews, and offender group therapy – and your involvement with them. Your willingness to take on new challenges, along with the support of your executive director or program director, will make all the difference in the success of this approach. Be aware, too, that our work as victim advocates needs to constantly evolve to meet the changing needs of victims. Victims have told us they want to know more about how sex offenders are monitored in the community; they want to know about offender treatment programs and offender relapse prevention plans. Through your work on a Sex Offender Containment Team, you can bring that knowledge to the victims you serve.


This booklet is the direct result of the work of dedicated advocates. Our grateful thanks must go to Victoria Sostack, Director, Office of the Victim Advocate; Joyce Lukima, Deputy Director of Field Services, PCAR/NSVRC; Crystal Karenchak, CAPSEA; Lou Ann Williams, Alice Paul House; Faith Burger, Centre County District Attorney’s office; and especially to Bill Allenbaugh, Project Point of Light, for his early recognition of the value of including survivors and their advocates in sex offender management efforts.

Going forward, we hope this new approach will re-energize you and re-affirm the important work you do for victims. Know this too: we are in it with you all the way.

Sincerely,



Carol L. Lavery
Victim Advocate - Commonwealth of PA



Delilah Rumburg
Executive Director - PA Coalition Against Rape



Statistics indicate that victim advocates are primarily female and that sex offenders are primarily male. However, an increasing number of men are working in the field of victim advocacy, and the number of female sex offenders is on the rise. For ease of comprehension and to avoid the awkward “he/she”, we have chosen to use “he” in reference to offenders and “she” when referring to victim advocates.

progress • n. / proh-g
movement towards a
improvement

a new approach



Section 1 - Introduction

As a victim advocate, your work focuses on the needs of the victim. Nothing in this booklet is going to change that. But within the criminal justice system, we are introducing a new approach to managing sex offenders, and we believe you have a central role to play in it.

Here's why: this new approach is victim-centered. It's intended to help empower victims of sexual violence and hold offenders accountable for their actions.

This approach calls on all disciplines involved with both sex offenders and their victims to work collaboratively to "contain" offenders. In fact, this approach is called the Sex Offender Containment Model (SOCM). Years of research and experience have shown us that we can't cure sex offenders. There is no medical treatment or therapy solution that will stop every sex offender from re-offending. At most, we can only "contain" them.

That containment or management is done through the work of a Sex Offender Containment *Team* (SOCT) who:

- Provides treatment therapies through qualified treatment providers
- Supervises through Probation & Parole
- Teaches offenders about the impact their violent actions have on their victims

In this booklet created exclusively for victim advocates, we'll explain:

- How the sex offender containment process is designed to work
- Each team member's role on the SOCT
- Best practices for victim advocates participating on a SOCT

Teamwork. For the SOCM approach to be successful, every team member has to understand their new, more expansive role within the model. They also have to be committed to working with other disciplines in new and different ways. This is actually a paradigm shift from the way our justice system has operated in the past. We want to tear down the old silos and focus on the unique knowledge each discipline brings to the containment process. So while you may already work with offender-focused agencies, you will now be asked to work with them *differently*. It's an adjustment for everyone. But if team members can work together, ignoring turf boundaries, egos, and the mindset that says, "The old way is the way we've always done it," there is a much better chance of containment.

The anticipated results? A reduction in victimization – and a safer community.

Sex Offender Containment Team members will vary, depending on the county and the funding available. They may include:

- Victim Advocates (Community-based and/or System-based)
- Law Enforcement
- DA's Office
- Treatment Providers
- Probation & Parole
- Community Members

Expert Comment:

Parole Agent: *There are several people who attend the meetings, and it seems to go very well. There is a lot of information that is passed around the room. Everyone seems to feel at ease, and the Victims' groups seem to appreciate the Probation and Parole agents listening to their concerns. It appears that there is a lot of trust that has been built.*

SOCT: The Victim Advocate's Role. Why do you need to know about sex offenders? The sex offender containment approach is victim-centered. We based this approach on the victim because she is at the center of the crime. The victim is the one against whom a crime was committed. The SOCT needs to understand the impact of the offense on the victim. That's where you, the victim advocate, come in.

The victim knows things about the offender and about the offense that the team can use to help manage (or contain) the offender more effectively. You are the victim's voice at the SOCT table. Even if you don't know the specific victim involved in a case, your specialized knowledge of victims can help inform treatment & supervision policy and practices. The reality is, you can have a direct hand in containing offenders and preventing them from re-offending.

There's also another aspect of your role on the SOCT to consider: victims want to know about the offender and what's happening with their case. You've probably already worked with victims who have asked questions like, "What kind of treatment plan is the offender participating in?" "How soon will he be allowed back on the streets?" By collaborating with agencies and partners involved with offender treatment and supervision, you will have better access to that information.

Expert Comment:

Victim Advocate: The sharing of information is invaluable when it comes to the victims. They love the fact that they can ask what's going on with the offender and receive an answer regarding their treatment.

Is the SOCM Approach Right for You? You may be asking yourself, "How will this collaborative sex offender management approach align with my responsibilities as a victim advocate?" Good question. Consider these two important factors in your decision. One is in your control; the other is not.

- Your Comfort Level
- Funding

Let's examine **Your Comfort Level** first. In your new role on the SOCT, you'll need to work with treatment and supervision in different ways from what you're used to. We'll explore some of those ways elsewhere in this booklet, but you should be aware that it may be unsettling at first to step into a more visible and active role regarding sex offender treatment. For instance, you may witness therapy sessions in which offenders talk about the offenses

you are the victim's voice

they've committed in a minimizing way. Some offenders may blame their victims. Still others may show no remorse or contrition – they may even deny their part in the offense. They may use language or terms that you find offensive. You have to be prepared for these types of offender behaviors. *(See Section 4-Group Therapy)*

Now keep in mind, you are not obligated to take on *every* task requested of you by the team. You need to assess your comfort level and participate only in those practices about which you feel competent.

One last thought – your primary job is to *support the victim at all times*. With your work on the SOCT, you'll be doing just that, but there's a catch: you have to enter the world of the sex offender.

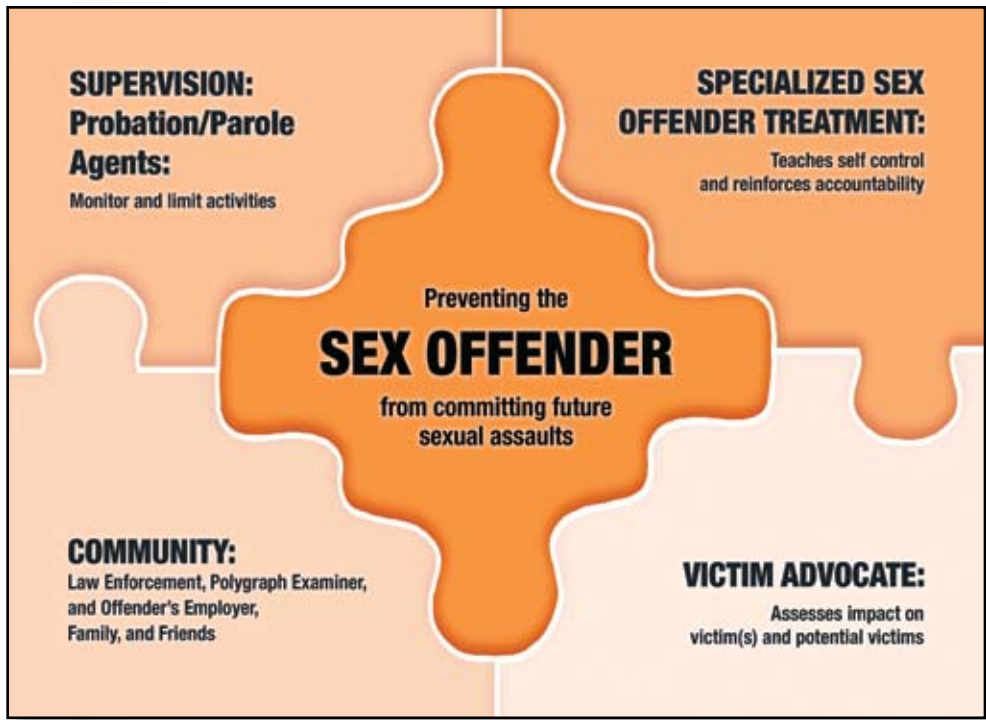
Funding. Before committing to the SOCT in your area, you need to know how much time you can devote to this collaborative process. That, of course, is a matter of funding. Basically, it's up to your executive director or program director to determine your level of participation. It will certainly depend on funding availability – which may be limited.

Since your involvement on the SOCT is not considered "direct victim services," if there is a question about whether to accompany a victim to court or to participate in a SOCT-led event, your response is a given. *Providing direct services to victims will always remain the priority.*



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study, experience
event or sit

victims always come first



Section 2 - Sex Offender Containment Model

The SOCM is a comprehensive approach to sex offender management. The approach is designed to draw on the expertise and special knowledge of all the agencies, partners and individuals who work with sex-related crimes in order to manage sex offenders more effectively.

Take a look at this graphic to learn more about each team member's role within the SOCM. Each piece of the puzzle represents an agency or partner that has responsibility for either:

- imposing *external* controls on offenders
- enhancing *internal* controls on offenders

When linked through a coordinated and collaborative approach, each partner plays a role in the prevention of future victimization.

Treatment Providers help the offender develop *internal controls*. They work with the offender to identify his specific pattern of abuse – the thoughts, actions, and events that preceded his offense – and then teach him how to respond differently to avoid re-offending.

Supervision is conducted by Probation or Parole agents. They are responsible for imposing *external controls* on offenders. The supervision agent (following the orders of the court or the PA Board of Probation and Parole) limits what the offender can do and tries to limit his exposure to potential victims and high-risk situations. One specific kind of external control is ensuring that the offender participates in appropriate treatment.

The Community can include a variety of people. Community members help impose *external controls* on the offender. Usually they include the offender's family, friends and employer. Law enforcement agencies may also be involved in the surveillance of the offender's activities.

Victim Advocates are concerned for the safety, empowerment and privacy of victims and their families. Their input can help impose *external controls* on offenders through community safety planning and enhance their *internal controls* through accountability letters and interviews (*Section 3 - Examples of Treatment Tools*). With these tools, you can confront the offender's minimization of the impact of the crime and re-frame the experience from the victim's perspective.

The role of the Victim Advocate on the SOCT will vary, depending on which type of advocate agency you work for - Community-Based or System-Based.

Community-Based Advocates:

- Work with all sexual assault victims – those who report an offense and those who don't
- Have more flexibility – both in terms of which areas of the criminal justice system they are able to work with and in their ability to limit their involvement if the victim is not comfortable participating in the prosecution of the crime
- May provide victim services 24/7
- Can offer confidential services

System-Based Advocates:

- Generally offer services only to victims whose cases are being processed in the criminal justice system
- May be limited to working with victims only while their case is within the agency the advocate serves (Ex., a police-based victim advocate may not be available to assist a victim after their case moves on to the prosecutor's office)
- Are not able to guarantee absolute confidentiality to victims due to the nature of prosecution
- May be available only during standard office hours

Expert Comment:

Victim Advocate: When we asked victims if they thought our program should include working with the sex offender intervention team, the answer we got back was: “Why wouldn’t you?” It made sense to them that we should be working with those folks who are working with the offender...that someone should be there speaking up for victims.

SOCM Best Practices.

Now that you know the team members and their roles, let’s move on to the “Best Practices.”

1. The Victim-Centered Approach

Victim protection and community safety are the primary objectives of the Sex Offender Containment Model. In an effective containment program, the healthy recovery and empowerment of the victim, along with the well-being of the community, guide treatment and supervision plans. Ideally, these targeted objectives will lead to reduced victimization.

2. Multi-Disciplinary Team Collaboration

Ideally, team members will meet on a regular basis to share expertise and ideas and discuss specific cases. They may also use the time to discuss policy changes. The goal is to create a *comprehensive* approach to sex offender management.

Victim Advocates are part of the team to:

- Serve as a “partner” in the containment process
- Provide the victim’s perspective to keep containment “victim-centered”
- Ensure offenders are held accountable

BUT BE AWARE:

- There may be turf issues
- Some team members may view *offenders* as the victims
- It may take time to build awareness of each team member’s role and perspective

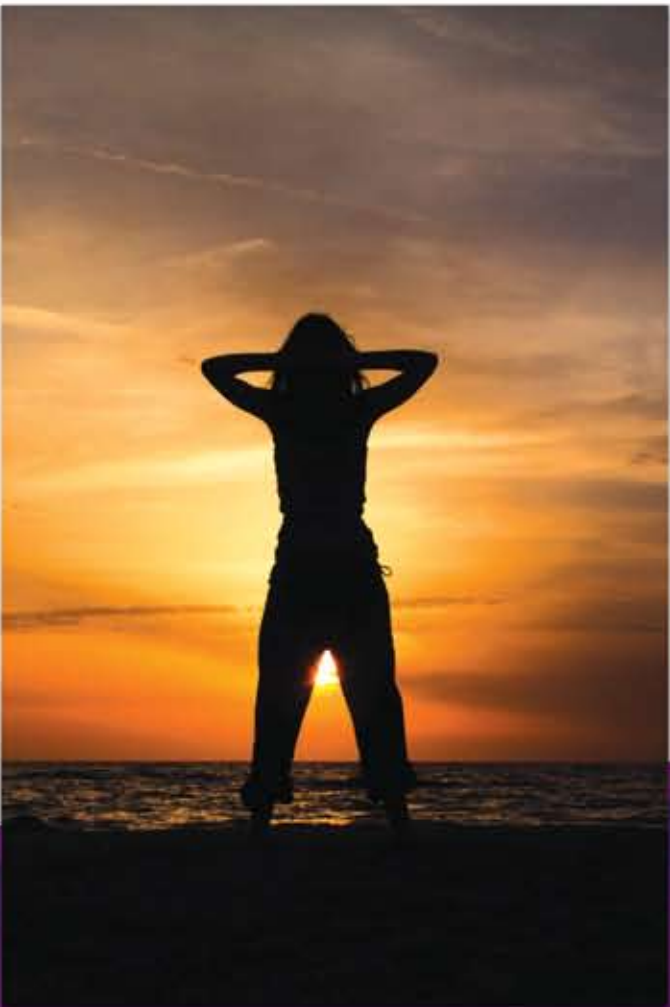
victim empowerment

3. Offender Accountability

As anyone who works with sex offenders knows, offenders can be manipulative and secretive. For example, they don’t usually offer full disclosure of their actions. They may blame the victims themselves for the offense. They may be in complete denial about their involvement in an offense. This is where the SOCM can have a big impact – they can hold offenders accountable for their actions.

To do that, the SOCM has to learn everything they can about the offender and his crime – which he may not be willing to divulge. Here’s what they need to understand: while in treatment/supervision, the offender has no rights to confidentiality. As a “Best Practice” for sex offender treatment, providers should require the offender to sign a Non-Confidentiality Waiver. This waiver allows for the free flow of information that is vital to treatment and supervision. With a signed waiver, the SOCT will have an easier time monitoring the offender and providing interventions in all environments.

The victim advocate also plays an important role in the accountability process. (See *Section 3 - Examples of Treatment Tools*,) Here’s where your value on the SOCT is clearly evident: offenders should not be allowed to minimize the impact of their crimes on their victims. Accountability goals should be part of the offender’s treatment plan – and you are there to make sure they are.



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offender containment

4. Policy Development

All of these collaborative efforts to contain offenders can only go so far. To be ultimately successful with offender containment, there must be on-going development of public policy at all levels of government. Here again, the victim advocate's experience and knowledge of victims can help educate and influence policy makers.

New policies should:

- Be based on research
- Empower those who work closely with sex-related crimes
- Hold offenders accountable
- Consider the impact on victims of sexual violence

5. Quality Control

Quality control is vital to any sex offender management program to ensure containment is handled in a fair and just way. Team members should consider:

- **Case Review Meetings** to confirm prescribed policies and practices are implemented as planned
- **Annual Training** is conducted on sexual assault, conflict resolution, teaming, victimization, trauma, family reunification, and treatment efficacy
- **Reviewing Case Data** if treatment fails or new sex crimes are committed, so gaps in containment can be identified and closed

Section 3 - Treatment & Supervision Practices

Treatment providers and supervision agents are largely responsible for sex offender containment. Their treatment and supervision plans, developed with the help of the SOCT, will help reduce victimization and keep communities safer.



The Sexual Offenders Assessment Board (SOAB) has created a comprehensive computer training program about the formation of Sex Offender Containment Teams and their “Best Practices.” Go to www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/site/default.asp for more information.

As you work with team members to create containment plans for offenders, you should be aware that:

- Victim Advocates can ensure victim restitution is included in the treatment plan.
- In terms of treatment and supervision, sex offenders do not have confidentiality rights.
- Victims have no obligation to provide input to the SOCT. Of course, they have valuable information about the offender and his modus operandi (M.O.) that would be helpful to the development of the containment plan, but they do not have to reveal it.

Treatment Providers

Before you join the SOCT in your jurisdiction, you need to do some homework. Check the SOAB website (meganslaw.state.pa.us/soab) for standardized lists showing:

- **Treatment Providers.** There are good providers and there are bad ones. Know who they are.
- **Sexually Violent Predator Treatment and Management Standards.** Be aware of the containment principles for all offender plans.

Examples of Treatment Tools

- **Accountability Letters.** Written to the victim by the offender in a group treatment program Demonstrates offender is taking responsibility for the offense and that he recognizes – to some degree – the impact of his offense upon his victim/s. (See Section 4)
- **Accountability Interviews.** Used to confirm the offender accepts responsibility for his offense and that he has a plan to prevent re-offending. (See Section 4)
- **Polygraph Examinations.** Promotes offender truthfulness. Used to discover offender's sexual history, number of victims, veracity of arousal log, etc. (See Section 4)
- **Victim Impact Statements (VIS).** Written by the victim and submitted to the court and/or supervising agent. Describes the physical, emotional, financial and spiritual impact of the crime on the victim and her family. The VIS may also be used in group treatment – *with the victim's permission*.

Supervision.

Community and victim safety are the primary objectives of sex offender supervision. This is an area where you can be of valuable assistance to your SOCT. Get to know the local Probation and Parole (P&P) officers. Through building relationships with P&P officers, you may find them more willing to listen to your recommendations about probation/parole conditions, offender accountability, and victim restitution.

By working with the SOCT – and P&P specifically – you will be able to participate in case review meetings and share information that can help promote victim protection and hold offenders accountable.

If an offender is being returned to the home where an offense took place, you may be called upon to prepare the family for reunification. (See Section 4 - Family Reunification Considerations) Once again, it's up to your agency to determine the level of your involvement.

Expert Comment:

Parole Agent: *The advantage to the way things are set up is that these offenders are held accountable. With all the different agencies and people on the team, there is a lot of input from different sources. The offenders can be confronted by the parole officer or the facilitators based on information learned at the team meetings.*

Section 4 - The Victim Advocate's Role on the SOCT

Now we get to the most critical information in this booklet: your involvement with the Sex Offender Containment Team. You are a partner on this team – an equal partner. The knowledge and input you share with the team have equal weight to the knowledge and input offered by other team members. But you are the one on the team who speaks for the victim. You are the one who may need to prompt the team to stay victim-centered.

These are your primary tasks as you serve on the SOCT:

- Ask questions
- Educate treatment providers and supervision officers about the short and long-term effects of victimization and trauma, and victim safety concerns
- Educate the team about offender accountability and how offenders perceive women and sexuality
- Help create new policies or influence case decisions that will create a safer environment for victims and the community
- Facilitate team members' contact with the victim – *if the victim is willing*
- Help with community notification when the offender being released is designated as a Sexually Violent Predator

working together

SOCT and Your Agency

The Sex Offender Containment Model is a paradigm shift – a new approach – to handling sex offenders. Is your agency prepared for you and other victim advocates to become more directly involved with offender containment? For community-based advocates, your executive director and your board need to be in agreement about the level of your involvement.



There should be a clear understanding of the SOCT's mission and objectives, each team member's role, and the type of treatment and supervision program options available to offenders. For example, one treatment option is the Offender Accountability Interview. You may agree to conduct an accountability interview at your agency's location. This location, as you know, is the victim's "safe haven." Agency staff will need a full briefing about the nature of the accountability interviews and then the agency will need to develop a plan for handling this type of interview. Items like: which entrance should the offender use, are there separate waiting rooms for offenders and victims and their families, how will staff be notified of the offender's arrival, etc., all need to be considered.

Most importantly, victim advocates who work directly with sex offenders will need a network of support. They will need to be able to download their feelings, frustrations and experiences to willing, compassionate ears. In effect, they need to debrief from their encounters with offenders. That cathartic release will enable advocates to cope better with their responsibilities at work and home.

New Ways to Work with Treatment and Supervision

Offender Accountability Letters. As part of an offender's treatment plan, he may be required to write an accountability letter, sometimes called an "empathy" letter. We prefer the term "accountability" however, because it indicates more clearly the purpose of the letter. That purpose is two-fold:

- Get the offender to accept responsibility for the offense and acknowledge the techniques he used to manipulate and/or force the victim
- Get the offender to recognize the impact of the assault on the victim

understanding the pain



The power of this letter can't be understated. If the offender is made to understand who the victim is and the pain and sense of betrayal he caused with his actions – in other words, “held accountable” – he may be less likely to re-offend. **You** play an important role in the development of this accountability letter. Here's how the letter – as part of treatment – is created:

GROUP THERAPY SESSION (Round 1):

1. Victim Services gives the treatment provider a letter template for the offender.
2. The offender writes the letter.
3. The offender reads the letter during his group therapy session. Other offenders, the treatment provider and P&P officers listen and offer feedback on the letter. Other offenders will be highly vocal with their criticisms/input on the letter. Typically, they don't allow each other any slack. (The victim advocate may also be present during this session; it depends on the level of desired involvement.)
4. The offender re-writes the letter and shares it with the group. The group offers more suggestions for changes.
5. The offender revises the letter and takes it back to the group a third time. This whole cycle may repeat itself many times until the group and the treatment provider agree the letter is ready to send to Victim Services.



VICTIM SERVICES:

1. The letter arrives at Victim Services for review.
2. The victim advocate carefully reviews the letter for examples of victim blaming and inflammatory words or thoughts. (Examples of “Hot Buttons” can be found at www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/site/default.asp)
3. The advocate makes recommendations for changes and then returns the letter to the treatment provider.

GROUP THERAPY SESSION (Round 2):

1. The treatment provider takes the feedback to the group session.
2. The offender re-writes the letter.
3. If the treatment provider is satisfied the offender has made the requested changes, the letter will be returned to Victim Services.

VICTIM SERVICES:

1. If the victim advocate accepts the revised letter, the letter writing ends. If she is still unsatisfied with the letter, she may send it back again for more revisions. *The Accountability Letter needs your critical eye because it is vital that the final version of the letter not re-traumatize the victim in any way.*
2. When the victim advocate has an approved letter in hand, she may call the victim – if she is known to the agency – to ask if she would like to see the letter. A cautionary note here: do **not** send the letter directly to the victim without prior contact and discussion with the victim. And while many victims may choose to accept the letter, some may not. It's their choice.
3. If the victim is a child, the victim advocate must work with a parent/guardian if the letter is to be shared with the child.
4. Let the victim know how the letter was developed so she is aware that the offender has been “coached” to some degree and that the letter has been reviewed. Some victims may not be happy with this process. They may feel the letter has been “sanitized,” but it's your job to explain that the letter is **one** component of an offender's treatment plan that may help him accept his responsibility for the offense.
5. If the victim wishes to see the letter, the victim advocate will need to prepare the victim by asking:
 - If the victim would like a support person with her as she reads the letter
 - If the victim would like to read the letter at the agency
6. After the victim reads the letter, the victim advocate should follow up with the victim to find out if she has any new concerns or issues or to see if she would like to meet with the treatment provider. In many cases, for example, the victim may want to get information from the provider about the offender's treatment program or his polygraph results. If the offender is a family member, the victim may want to meet with him to ask more questions than the letter answers.

Offender Accountability Interviews. An accountability interview – like the letter – is considered a treatment option. This interview is typically held *after* the offender has been in group therapy for some time and *before* his relapse prevention plan begins.

You, the victim advocate, will be conducting the interview. Your goals are similar to the letter goals:

- Get the offender to see the victim as a person
- Get the offender to accept responsibility
- Ensure the offender understands the impact of the offense on the victim

The difference is, obviously, in an interview, you will be face-to-face with the offender. Before getting started, there are a number of ground rules you should be familiar with:

Prior to the Interview:

- Make arrangements for a colleague or a member of the SOCT to debrief you after you have met with the offender.
- Decide on a location that you and your agency feel is most conducive to a productive interview. Your agency may or may not be the right place.
- Conduct the interview before the offender’s relapse prevention planning.
- If the offender committed his offense against a victim you are assisting or counseling, find another victim advocate to conduct the interview.
- Decide how much information you want to take into the interview. (You may or may not have the offender’s background or accountability letter.) Some advocates who do these types of interviews prefer to have very little knowledge about the offender or the offense, while others find it helpful to have this information prior to the interview.
- Develop a list of questions with the victim’s input and assistance – if they’re interested. This is an opportunity to get the offender to answer questions that the victim has been thinking about.

Possible Interview Questions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • What were the original charges?
(If it was a plea bargain.) | • How have the family and friends of the victim been affected? |
| • Tell me about your deviant cycle. | • What needs to happen for a victim to move on with her life? |
| • What are your red flags? | • Do you feel that you have an obligation to the victim? |
| • How has your family handled this? | • Do you feel that the victim has an obligation to <i>you</i> ? |
| • Has your family accepted that you committed this crime? | • What do you think are the needs of a victim of sexual crimes? |
| • If not, how does that affect you? | • What do you think can be done to better educate the community about sexual offenders? |
| • Can you tell me how sexual abuse affects a victim? | |
| • What are long-term effects? | |

accepting responsibility

Schedule the interview with the offender. Make sure he:

- Sets up the interview himself. Don’t allow a girlfriend, wife, or friend to make the arrangements.
- Works within your schedule, not the other way around
- Arrives alone – no friends or family
- Is prepared to make a donation to your advocacy program. (If he can’t afford to make a monetary donation, some sort of in-kind donation should be arranged.)

During the Interview:

- On arrival at the interview location, the offender is likely to show a range of emotions: anxiety, fear, apprehension, contrition, anger, etc. Be prepared.
- Listen and watch for verbal and non-verbal cues. Maintain eye contact. Sex offenders are notoriously deceptive. Rely on your observation and listening skills to guide the conversation and follow up on those things that seem contradictory or unclear.
- Get the offender to talk about:
 - His “red flags.” What triggers his relapses?
 - His “safety plan.” How does he plan to avoid re-offending?
 - His family. Does his family know the whole truth? How did his actions affect them?
 - His impact on the victim. Does he understand the emotional, financial and long-term impact on the victim?
- Be aware that some offenders may try to take the discussion to a sexually arousing level. Treatment providers are very attuned to this sort of sneaky arousal behavior on the part of sex offenders. Talk to them about the offender’s arousal pattern, so that you, too, can develop some sort of “radar” if the offender appears to be getting excited when he talks about the victim or the offense.
- At the conclusion of the interview:
 - Collect a donation for your agency. This is a part of supervision’s plan for the offender to make restitution.
 - Tell the offender what will be reported back to the provider.



cooperate (and
(with) work or act together
do as one is asked

offender's truthfulness

After the Interview:

- Report back to the offender's treatment provider and/or supervision officer on your assessment of the offender's acceptance of responsibility and his understanding of the impact of the offense. Basically, does he "get it?"
- Offer to share information from the interview with the victim.
- Always, **always** debrief with your support network.

The Polygraph. Another treatment option for the offender is the polygraph. There are several types of polygraph tests. (You can familiarize yourself with the different types and their uses at the www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/site/default.asp) Polygraphs are used as a tool to promote the offender's truthfulness. Examiners are looking to verify the offender's self-reports on his arousal log, sexual activity, fantasies, masturbation history, and the possession of trophies or items that belong to the victim. The polygraph is also helpful to victims. That's because they may be given the opportunity to provide information for the polygraph that can be turned into questions, or they may be allowed to ask questions that the examiner can then re-frame for the test. The results of the test can be used to refine safety plans, validate the victim's experience and assist in offender accountability.

Expert Comment:

Victim Advocate: *Victims have been very pleased at the intensity of the program. The most surprising thing for them is the polygraph and their ability to submit questions. One victim told me she felt this was a way to have power over the perpetrator – a role reversal, if you will. The offender must answer questions truthfully, thereby getting answers to the questions the victim has had for so long.*

Sex Offender Group Treatment Sessions. As a way of learning more about offender behaviors and their "red flags," you may ask to sit in on an offender group therapy session. The information you learn here may be shared with the victim and help her to understand how group treatment works. When you attend a session, you should:

- Be prepared for extremely graphic language.
- Be observant.
- Be prepared to address victim blaming or minimizing statements by the offender.
- Be aware that some treatment providers may use sexist language or appear to exhibit inappropriate "colluding" with the offender after a group session. It's rare, but it does happen.

Working with the Non-Offending Parent. In child sex abuse situations, you may be asked to work with the non-offending parent. Here's why you should say "yes." First, you show support for the victim – especially if you're working with a parent who doesn't believe the crime occurred. By sharing the victim's perspective with the non-offending parent, you may persuade them to change their mind. The parent may then take that message to the offender himself, helping to promote his accountability and prevent a possible relapse. You can also educate the non-offending parent about the dynamics of sexual violence. The parent will then be able to watch for potential triggers and behaviors if (or when) the offender returns home.

Family Reunification Considerations.

Finally, you may become involved with family reunification plans. Family reunification is a complex issue. Those involved with the planning – the victim advocate, offender's treatment provider, family therapist, and supervision officer – must all carefully weigh the benefits versus the risks. The safety and protection of the victim should be the primary goal. If the planning goes forward, keep these considerations in mind:

Reunification must be:

- In the best interests of the victim
- Flexible and responsive
- Gradual and deliberate
- Collaborative

If the victim was a family member, request her input for the offender's supervision conditions. The victim may not want the offender to return home, but don't assume that. Also, you need to be conscious that other family members may be pressuring the victim to "go along with" the offender's return. To ensure the victim's needs are met, you should make her aware of the support services available outside the family so she has someone to talk to about her safety concerns or other issues.

Successful reunification efforts should be defined as those in which the victim feels safe.

Section 5 - Conclusion

The Sex Offender Containment Model has been proven to be an effective approach to containing and managing sex offenders. To view examples of sex offender containment programs in different parts of the country, go to www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/site/default.asp.

With the SOCM, victims are no longer on the sidelines in the sex offender management process. They have a key place at the table – through you. With your expertise and knowledge, you can affect case decisions and influence policy development that will lead to reduced victimization and safer communities. It won't be easy work, but the results will be worth it. Remember – there is no cure for sex offenders, only *containment*.