

Circles of Support & Accountability

A “How To” Guide for Establishing CoSA in Your Location

Produced under contract to:

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For:

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART)



Disclaimer: This project was supported by Award No. 2012-AW-BX-K011, awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Prof. Lynne Van Luven and Scott Frahllich for their assistance with reviewing and editing this guide. We would also like to thank the staff at Counseling and Psychotherapy Center of America; particularly Jodine Kuhlman, Tim Sinn, Dennis McNamara, Tim App, Dan Cottam, and Barry Anechiarico for their support over the tenure of this project. Last, we would like to thank Drew Doll, Gudrun Parmer, and Audrey DeCoursey for their work on the CoSA pilot projects in Durham, NC and Portland, OR, as well as the many core members who, along with their dedicated volunteers, have done their best to integrate safely with the community.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Guide is to help familiarize readers with Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), a unique and restorative justice-informed approach to the safe community integration of persons who have sexually offended and who typically present as both high-risk and high-need. Contained within is information essential to the development of a viable CoSA project in your community.

There are a number of different reasons why people might wish to implement a CoSA project. Perhaps, you are drawn to this work because you have heard good things about CoSA, including its ability to reduce rates of sexual re-offending (recidivism) among persons who have sexually offended. You may also have heard that the fundamental “model” for CoSA involves a group of community-based volunteers supporting an individual released from prison to the community, to “circle” him with well-intentioned citizens who will hold him (and it usually is a male) accountable while also providing him with needed support – or what some refer to as “supportive accountability.” We agree that at first it all seems quite simple and straight-forward. We also know, after nearly twenty years of experience with CoSA in Canada, the United States, and elsewhere around the world, that there is much more to CoSA than first meets the eye. We estimate that, starting from scratch, setting up a viable, safe, and effective CoSA project takes roughly two years of dedicated work on the part of organizers. Sometimes, if there is an organizational “infrastructure” already in place with people experienced in working with individuals re-entering the community after serving time in prison, that time line can be shortened.

To date, CoSA has been researched and evaluated in a number of different jurisdictions, including Canada, the United Kingdom (U.K.), the United States, and Europe. The results, which we will present to you, are encouraging and, as we mentioned, may even be one of the reasons you are reading this document. As lead researchers and evaluators of CoSA, we want to point out that the research has been performed based on a particular CoSA “model,” albeit one that is flexible and resilient to variation. These variations, however, have been instituted around a core framework for CoSA. What you will find in this Guide is a presentation of those core elements. We encourage you to take care to ensure that these core elements, as presented here, become defining features of your CoSA, and that your variations are well documented, along with your rationale.

We have two reasons for urging you to remain faithful to the CoSA model presented in this guide. The first is that we want your CoSA to be successful and to share in the fine reputation CoSA has garnered world-wide. Second, while there is a growing body of research and evaluation, we need more research. At some point, we would like your CoSA to become part of that research base. For that to happen, we need to be researching and evaluating the same or very similar things: apples-to-apples, as the saying goes. To assist in planning your CoSA, or to help evaluate your existing CoSA against the core CoSA model defined in this Guide, we refer you to *Appendix A: CoSA Basic Model Fidelity Checklist*. Many of the forms, interview protocols, application forms, and even some generic PowerPoints are in the Appendices, and we will direct you to them periodically throughout this Guide.

We have written this Guide with the intention of making it much more than a dissertation on the mechanics of a model, as important as those are. It has been our intention to go deeper and help you understand the founding philosophies of CoSA, and why it is important to keep those in mind. We want you to see the “how to” of CoSA, but also to go further and explore what happens inside a circle – why CoSA seems to work. In short, we want you to understand the concepts we feel are important to consider and include if you wish to be effective in helping both individuals released from prison and their communities to stay healthy and safe.

We trust you will find this Guide useful. Information we present here has been freely shared with us by CoSAs world-wide. We are providing it to you the same way, and ask that in joining the CoSA community, you share your experiences freely with others who may come to you to learn from your experience.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF COSA

In asking the question, “Who is responsible for safety in the community?” one might be tempted to point to police and other government agencies as shouldering the burden of maintaining public safety. However, upon further reflection most people would ultimately agree that community safety cannot be achieved without some degree of involvement of the community (Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013).

Nearly two centuries ago, Sir Robert Peel was twice Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and is generally regarded as the “father” of modern policing. He is famously quoted as having said, “The police are the public and the public are the police,” indicating an understanding that communities are safer when collaboration occurs. Similarly, the late great Norwegian sociologist Nils Christie (1977) emphasized a need for citizens to be part of the “conflict” raised by criminal justice difficulties:

...community is made from conflict as much as from cooperation; the capacity to solve conflict is what gives social relations their sinew. Professionalizing justice “steals the conflicts,” robbing the community of its ability to face trouble and restore peace. Communities lose their confidence, their capacity, and, finally, their inclination to preserve their own order. They instead become consumers of police and court “services” with the consequence that they largely cease to be communities.

Another insight regarding the need for partnership between citizens and statutory agencies (police, government risk management services) comes from the field of urban planning. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) also highlights a key responsibility for community members in maintaining “public peace”:

The first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves. No amount of police can enforce Civilization where the normal causal enforcement of it has broken down.

Following from these perspectives, it would be our contention that the community has as much of a role to play in its own safety as does any person or agency acting in an official

capacity. However, it has been our observation that a great degree of fear and apprehension surrounds the topic of sexual violence prevention – to the extent that many citizens don't know how to be involved. Indeed, many individuals in the community express both anger and frustration at offenses committed against women, children, and other vulnerable individuals and, at times, these emotions have bled over into more overt forms of community unrest, including picketing and vigilantism (Silverman & Wilson, 2002).

In many jurisdictions, the criminal justice approach to persons convicted of sexual offenses has become increasingly punitive and controlling, to the extent that such individuals are likely the most closely managed criminal justice population. Measures such as sex offender registries, residency restrictions, electronic and global position satellite (GPS) monitoring, and strict community management policies have been implemented in effort to contain the risk posed by individuals who have engaged in sexual violence. However, research has not clearly demonstrated the efficacy of such measures (see summary in Wilson & Sandler, in press), suggesting that other, more creative approaches to increasing public safety may be required. It is against this backdrop that we introduce Circles of Support and Accountability, a unique and creative approach to the safe and humane community integration of persons convicted of sexual offenses.

What is CoSA? – A Quick Introduction to the Model

Before we get too far into explaining how CoSA works, it is important to outline exactly what a Circle of Support and Accountability is. The model, as it currently exists, represents an attempt to involve community volunteers in the risk management process regarding sexual violence prevention. The model consists of two concentric circles of people (see Figure 1, below). The inner circle is comprised of a person released from prison after serving time most often for sexual offenses (i.e., the “core member”) and between three and five community volunteers. These volunteers have received training to the extent that they are more knowledgeable about sexual violence prevention than most others in their communities; however, they are not trained to the extent that they could function as *de facto* case managers or treatment providers. Indeed, we always make it clear in training that that is not their role – they are expected to provide friendly support while keeping an eye open for problems that could potentially lead to renewed engagement in sexual and other offending. The outer circle is

populated by “local professionals” (e.g., psychologists, law enforcement officers, probation and parole staff, victim advocates, etc.) who have expert knowledge in sexual violence prevention.

The responsibility of the volunteers in the inner circle is to engage with the core member in such a way that he is able to better integrate with the community, access necessary services, and have people on whom he can rely for support and advocacy. The outer circle provides guidance and consultation on issues that require a higher level of technical knowledge and expertise. For instance, the inner circle is well-situated to assist the core member in reacquiring identification, seeking safe housing, and identifying employment opportunities, but issues directly related to risk for reoffense (e.g., victim access, increased experience of problematic fantasies or urges, or a return to alcohol or substance abuse) are more in the purview of the outer circle and, upon learning of such difficulties, the inner circle should ask for assistance. In order to ensure that the respective functions of each circle occur appropriately, most CoSA projects have a designated Project Coordinator. This Project Coordinator is often a paid staff person whose responsibilities include overall project management and maintenance of a healthy CoSA endeavor. In order to ensure the latter, Project Coordinators must be apprised of the activities and situations occurring in individual circles. That is, the Project Coordinator is there to ensure that the inner circle understands when it needs to ask the outer circle for guidance, and that the outer circle provides that guidance when asked.

Although there are small variations in how CoSA projects are developed and maintained internationally, this concentric circle model is generally accepted by all jurisdictions in which projects are found. Let us now turn to the history of CoSA, from Canada to the United Kingdom and the United States and beyond.

Circles in Canada – The Beginning

The first part of the history of Circles of Support and Accountability is a Canadian story, which may tempt some readers to skip this section as being irrelevant to the application of CoSA in the United States. That would be a mistake. Understanding the origins of CoSA helps readers grasp its essence, and how CoSA fits within the local context of an American county, city, or town.

In the spring of 1994, psychologist Bill Palmer of Warkworth Institution, a medium-security penitentiary located two hours northeast of Toronto, in the province of Ontario, had a problem. Mr. Palmer had been working closely with Charlie Taylor, an inmate with a particularly lengthy history of child sexual abuse offenses. Indeed, Charlie had been committing offenses against young boys since he was an adolescent himself and, for the most part, had never spent much more than six months free in the community since his offending history began. Mr. Palmer's problem was that Charlie was reaching the end of his sentence, and was slated for release soon. The available evidence suggested that he would likely reoffend within a short period after release – unless something could be done. Indeed, using an early actuarial risk assessment instrument known as the *Violence Prediction Scheme* (Webster, Harris, Rice, Cormier, & Quinsey, 1994), Charlie's risk to reoffend was judged to be 100% chance of sexual or violent reoffending in seven years post-release, in comparison to other offenders with similar risk profiles.

Interested to know what might happen upon his client's release, Mr. Palmer contacted his community-based partners to inquire about what services might be available to Charlie; specifically regarding treatment and risk management. However, due to Canadian government policy at the time, there would be no specialized services available. Because of Charlie's particularly high risk to reoffend, the National Parole Board (NPB) had ordered him detained in prison until the very last day of his sentence, whereupon he would leave the facility with no designated case-management services and no access to settlement agencies or treatment. Essentially, Charlie would re-enter the community a free man, accountable to nobody but himself (aside from the laws and social conventions applicable to all citizens). Services normally available to individuals released prior to sentence completion were unavailable because Charlie would no longer be serving a sentence and, therefore, government officials could not mandate or fund his participation. Attempts to liaise with other local agencies and partners commonly involved in the resettlement of offenders on conditional release also resulted in no services being offered. Frankly, most agencies were afraid of the risk Charlie posed.

Mr. Palmer met with community corrections officials, including Correctional Services Canada (CSC) Community Sex Offender Specialist Robin Wilson in Toronto, inviting those officials to meetings aimed at creative problem-solving. The problem in need of solving was that

Charlie would be released to essentially nothing – no family, friends, or concerned others who would assist in his settlement in the community. Worse still, because he would be released at sentence completion as a private citizen, there would/could be no formal risk management framework.

In speaking with Charlie before his release, he shared information with Mr. Palmer that he had once been involved in a prison in-reach program known as Man-to-Man, Woman-to-Woman (M2W2 – see Yantzi, 1998), in which community volunteers visit offenders and attempt to prepare them for life on the outside. One of the volunteers who had worked with Charlie in M2W2 was the Reverend Harry Nigh, pastor of a small urban Mennonite congregation known as the Welcome Inn in Hamilton, Ontario – a small city about 90 minutes southwest of Toronto. Upon being contacted in advance of Charlie’s impending release, Rev. Nigh and some of his church elders pledged to provide him with support as he attempted to *integrate* with the community. Note the use of the term “integrate” here, instead of reintegrate. We say this because there was good evidence to support a perspective that Charlie had never really been a functioning member of the community; thus, reintegrate would be a mischaracterization. As you will likely find in your work in CoSA, this is often the case for many persons who become “core members” of a circle. This highlights a reality that many persons who commit sexual offenses, along with their peers in the criminal justice system, have complex presentations often including a higher than average number of what we refer to in the literature as “adverse childhood experiences” (ACE – see Levenson, Willis, & Prescott, 2014; Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013).

Charlie was eventually released to Hamilton, a small city in Southern Ontario, in June 1994. When he hit the streets, the community went wild. Media coverage began the day of his release and for weeks was unrelenting in its focus on him. Every school child in the Hamilton-Wentworth area came to class the day after Charlie’s release to find a flyer with his picture on their desk stating, “If you see this man, call Police.” Further, Police services put around-the-clock surveillance on Charlie to ensure that he did not immediately return to offending. However, while most of the Hamilton community was expressing its anger and frustration at the release of a high-risk person convicted of multiple sexual offenses into their midst, a small group of courageous citizens was doing something that no group in similar circumstances had ever done before – they were welcoming Charlie into their lives and pledging to help him establish a safe existence in the community.

That small group of concerned citizens formed by Rev. Nigh and his church elders, nicknamed “Charlie’s Angels,” became the very first Circle of Support and Accountability; although formal designation of the model was still many months away. Largely as a result of the group’s intercessions with Charlie, he was able to find appropriate housing, secure social service (disability) funding, and meet many other basic needs that his institutionalization and notoriety would likely have prevented. Ultimately, days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months; Charlie did not return to sexual violence. The media attention died down, and the police eventually realized that the cost of surveillance was unwarranted, given Charlie’s affiliation with Rev. Nigh and his team.

The Reverend Hugh Kirkegaard was the community chaplain affiliated with Correctional Services Canada in the Greater Toronto Area at the time, and had been one of the officials involved in discussions with Mr. Palmer in advance of Charlie’s release. Along with others, he was a major catalyst in the creative problem-solving outlined above regarding Charlie. Thus, when a similarly high-risk individual with a long-term history of engaging in sexual violence was due to be released later the same year, Rev. Kirkegaard decided to try to compose a support group similar to that offered to Charlie.

Wray Budreo had been offending against children since he was a child himself. Psychological evaluations completed by corrections officials were unanimous in predicting that he would likely do so again shortly after release – his risk was analogous to Charlie’s, using the same early actuarial methods. However, as someone serving a determinate sentence, and having been similarly detained to sentence completion by the NPB, Wray would also be released regardless of that risk and to no formal risk management framework. He too, as a free citizen, would be accountable to no one, and it was expected that he would experience the same difficulty accessing services as Charlie would have five months earlier.

Wray was ultimately settled in Toronto, with a circle comprised largely of the priest and parishioners of a local Anglican church. As with Charlie, prognostications of Wray’s impending failure – 100% chance of sexual reoffending in seven years – were not realized. Indeed, both Charlie and Wray lived peacefully in their communities for more than a decade before their deaths, never incurring new charges for sexual or violent behavior.

A year later (1995), based on the successes observed in these two fledgling circles, Canadian corrections officials and representatives of the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario (MCCO) approached then-Solicitor General Herb Grey to solicit funding and operational support for their endeavors. Initially, the minister was reluctant to assist, citing no legal authority to provide sex offender risk-management services to private citizens. However, on further consideration, the minister acknowledged the government's moral responsibility to community safety and provided a small amount of seed money for MCCO to mount a pilot CoSA project and to produce an evaluation. MCCO and its partners began to develop a framework to support more circles and Circles of Support and Accountability was underway.

The initial evaluations of the CoSA pilot project conducted by Wilson and associates (Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2007a-c) were the first of their kind demonstrating the effectiveness of community members engaging with high-risk persons who have sexually offended to promote increased community safety while allowing individuals to find a place to be, post-release from prison. The first study (Wilson et al., 2007c) suggested that reductions in sexual reoffending as large as 70% were possible as a consequence of CoSA involvement. A subsequent study (Wilson, Cortoni, & McWhinnie, 2009) involving a Canadian national sample provided equally encouraging results. The research base underscoring the efficacy of the CoSA model continues to grow, and now includes both evaluations of recidivism rates and qualitative outcomes regarding effects on participants, community building, and public safety. With respect to recidivism rates, three studies have been completed using matched comparison designs in which CoSA participants were matched to non-CoSA participants on variables such as risk, treatment participation, time and jurisdiction of release, and release status. We will make note of other research and evaluation findings throughout, and in greater detail in a forthcoming section.

Circles in the United Kingdom¹

In June 2000, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) invited five individuals, including Dr. Robin Wilson and Rev. Hugh Kirkegaard from Canada with experience in mounting and delivering CoSA in that country. They were invited to share their experiences of the model and to provide information as to how CoSA might be implemented in the United Kingdom. During that consultation, meetings were held with stakeholders associated with such

¹ This section includes information adapted from Bates, Williams, Wilson, & Wilson (2013).

organizations as the Religious Society of Friends, the Home Office, the Parole Board, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, and the National Organization for the Treatment of (Sexual) Abusers (NOTA). A meeting with Her Majesty's Prison Service included a visit to HMP Grendon to meet with administrators, treatment providers, and inmates (Wilson, McWhinnie, & Wilson, 2008). These meetings helped establish a collective of persons and agencies interested in exploring innovative approaches to assist persons who have sexually offended leaving prison and reentering the community. Furthermore, in basing the development and implementation of CoSA in the U.K. on the Canadian model, a foundation was laid for valid measurement of the potential success of such projects. While U.K.-based statutory agencies charged with the risk management of persons who have sexually offended were interested in the implementation of Circles, just like their Canadian compatriots, they needed evidence that investment in such an intervention was worthwhile.

In 2001, the U.K. Home Office agreed to fund three projects over an initial three-year period (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2005). These three projects were with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, Thames Valley Probation, and Hampshire Probation – the latter two projects ultimately combined into one project in 2006, becoming known as the Hampshire Thames Valley (HTV) Circles. In 2010, HTV Circles expanded further to include Kent, whereupon it became known as Circles South East (CSE). Ultimately, as CoSA gained traction in the U.K., a national charity was launched under the moniker Circles-UK (see Hanvey, Philpot, & Wilson, 2011). This award winning initiative has subsequently provided an excellent example of partnership between the community and statutory agencies – all of whom have enunciated a wish to make their society safer.

Somewhat similar to the containment model popular in the United States (English, Jones, & Pullen, 1998), the U.K. employs Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA – see Wood & Kemshall, 2007) to manage risk posed to the community by persons who have sexually offended. These MAPPAs include probation and parole personnel together with law enforcement officials and other important stakeholder groups interested in maintaining public safety. Over time, Circles-UK has become an important part of that multidisciplinary partnership, representing both the community and released individuals with sexual offense histories.

Efficacy research was conducted (Bates et al., 2013) involving two groups of released individuals with sexual violence histories – a group of 71 subjects who were found suitable to receive a circle through CSE and did, plus another 71 comparison subjects who were referred to CSE and deemed suitable, but who did not receive a circle. Follow-up behaviors of both groups were examined (including all forms of reconviction, breach of orders, and prison recall). Over a comparable follow-up period of 55 months, the incidence of violent and contact sexual reconviction in the comparison group was significantly higher than for the circles cohort. These results found in the U.K. circles experience were very similar to those obtained earlier in Canada.

Circles in Europe and Other Locales

CoSA in Europe (Circles4EU – see Höing, Bates, et al., 2011) began as an adaptation of the Circles-UK model, with the inner circle comprised of three to six volunteers and the outer circle being populated by the professionals who are involved in the core member's aftercare arrangements (e.g., probation officer, therapist, local police officer). Participation in a circle is not limited to a specific time, but Höing and associates (Höing, Bogaerts, & Vogelvang, 2013) report that a typical circle lasts for about 12-18 months. Using the Netherlands as an example (most Circles4EU research and literature emanates from the Netherlands), CoSA projects in Europe tend to be oriented in a “top down” fashion, in which they are fully incorporated and run by criminal justice organizations. According to Höing (personal communication) and www.circles4.eu, projects are reportedly underway in the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Spain/Catalonia, Bulgaria, and Latvia.

We are also aware of CoSA projects in other international jurisdictions, such as New Zealand (Fox, 2015; Van Rensburg, 2012) and Australia, with interest having been expressed by groups in Japan and Korea. Through our work providing training and technical assistance to CoSA startup projects in the United States, we are frequently approached for information and assistance by groups throughout the U.S. and abroad.

Circles in the United States

As early as the late 1990s, small pockets of concerned practitioners in the United States were experimenting with the CoSA model and approach. Among the first were found in Olmsted County, Minnesota and the State of Vermont. Nearly 20 years later, CoSA projects exist in a number of U.S. locales, with interest increasing as jurisdictions strive to increase public safety

and support the safe and humane return of released individuals to the community. Well-established projects exist in Fresno, California and Durham, North Carolina, as well as throughout both Minnesota and Vermont, while interest grows in many other communities. Through the grant associated with this report, we have been able to provide training and technical assistance across the country.

The approach to CoSA project development in the U.S. has varied in comparison to the Canadian and U.K. examples. Whereas the birth of CoSA in Canada represented a grass-roots, community-based response to an untenable situation, the U.K. experience represents something more of an intentional partnership between the government and social service agencies (referred to as “charities” in the U.K., but roughly equivalent to what Americans would refer to as a 501(c)(3)). Some CoSA projects in the U.S., most notably Fresno and early attempts at CoSA project development in Pennsylvania (now inactive), came about similarly to projects in Canada; however, a majority of projects in the U.S. mimic the U.K. approach of partnership between the government and community justice agencies under contract to provide reintegration services to persons released from prison. Indeed, both the Durham, NC and Vermont projects are set up in this fashion – a community justice center receives referrals from the Department of Corrections and provides support and accountability through CoSA as part of its cadre of community risk management services. This type of partnership appears to have worked quite well in North Carolina and Vermont, to the extent that those CoSA projects are firmly situated as part of the multidisciplinary framework for sexual violence prevention in those jurisdictions (regarding VT, see Fox, 2014; Wilson, Fox, & Kurmin, 2017).

A somewhat different approach has been undertaken in Minnesota, where CoSA has become part of the Department of Corrections (DOC) roster of program opportunities for individuals released from prison to the community. Although the work in circles remains the responsibility of community volunteers – as is the case in all CoSA projects worldwide, all other management and logistical elements are managed by the Minnesota DOC. Philosophically, one might see the MN variant of CoSA as being a “top-down” (government driven) approach to project management, whereas the Canadian approach might be cast as “bottom-up,” in recognition of its grass-roots origins. This distinction may ultimately be an important consideration when we discuss research methodology and outcomes later in this guide.

Reporting on the MnCoSA program, Duwe's (2013) research showed that CoSA core members were 62% less likely to be rearrested, 72% less likely to be revoked for a technical violation, and 84% less likely to be re-incarcerated for any reason – all of these findings being statistically significant. In addition to reporting data on re-arrest, revocation, and re-incarceration, Duwe also completed a cost-benefit analysis demonstrating a substantial return on investment. The cost-benefit ratio in Minnesota is \$1.82, meaning that for every dollar the MnDOC spends on CoSA, they receive back \$1.82 in benefits, some of which translates into increased community safety. Other jurisdictions have also conducted cost-benefit analyses. In the U.K., Elliott and Beech (2013) found that the cost-benefit ratio was marginally positive and at least broke even when considering only tangible costs. Elliott and Beech theorized further that the benefit to society may be five to ten times greater when intangibles (e.g., harm to victims, families, communities) were considered. In Canada, a National Demonstration Project evaluation (Chouinard & Riddick, 2015) demonstrated a \$4.60 return on investment for every dollar spent on CoSAs in Canada.

As noted above, Vermont has had unique fortune insofar as its community justice infrastructure allowed for the incorporation of the CoSA model into its re-entry strategy. A network of Community Justice Centers (CJCs) is usually run by municipalities but partially funded by the Department of Corrections. Having a history of coordinating community-based reparative boards, and enjoying some autonomy from corrections, some CJCs began CoSAs in 2005. To date, all 20 Vermont CJCs run CoSAs, and Vermont has offered circles to more than 150 individuals, which is a much greater number than any other state. Considering that Vermont's correctional population is less than 2,000 persons, the number is even more notable.

Promoting and Evaluating CoSA in the U.S.A

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Program's SMART (Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking) Office issued requests for proposals regarding CoSA project evaluability (see Elliott, Zajac, & Meyer, 2013), as well as project development and support. Regarding the former, five CoSA projects (Fresno, CA; Durham, NC; Lancaster, PA; Colorado; and Vermont) were sampled as to their fidelity with the Canadian model. Fidelity scores varied across projects – due largely to differences in the extent to which individual projects were capable of providing circles at the time of assessment,

with Vermont and Fresno demonstrating 86% and 58% fidelity, respectively. Lancaster demonstrated 52% fidelity, while Colorado and Durham were at 27% and 24%. Ultimately, Elliott et al. concluded that there were encouraging results available *vis a vis* reoffense outcome statistics, but that more research was required. They also highlighted a need for randomized controlled trials (RCT), noting that such methodologies would represent a “gold standard” in CoSA outcome research. While this latter point may have merit, there are potential difficulties associated with achieving that level of research sophistication, given the different ways in which CoSA projects are conceived and implemented.

With respect to CoSA project development and support (i.e., training and technical assistance), SMART simultaneously requested proposals for a trial project called “Promoting Evidence Integration in Sex Offender Management: Circles of Support and Accountability for Project Sites.” This offering was intended to provide financial support to three jurisdictions interested in establishing a CoSA project. Regarding training and technical assistance, SMART issued a request for proposals seeking TTA support for those three jurisdictions, named “Promoting Evidence Integration in Sex Offender Management: Circles of Support and Accountability Training and Technical Assistance Project.” While three sites were originally contemplated, only two projects were eventually launched under these grants, one in Durham (Durham County), North Carolina, and the second in Portland (Multnomah County), Oregon. These CoSA projects were funded for two years by the OJP SMART Office.

Under the terms of the second grant, training and technical assistance (TTA) for the Durham and Portland sites was provided by the Counseling and Psychotherapy Center of America, Inc., who subcontracted with Wilson Psychological Services, LLP, of Sarasota, Florida. Over and above TTA services provided to Durham and Portland, *ad hoc* consultations were provided to several other U.S. locations interested in establishing CoSAs, including sites in California, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington State. A majority of these sites hosted at least a full-day onsite orientation to the principles and practices of CoSA, with technical assistance on how to begin to establish CoSA in the local jurisdiction. In most cases these *ad hoc* consultations involved collaboration between members of faith and lay communities, as well as officials from the state and/or county department of corrections and, in some cases, probation services.

WHAT IS A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY?

We briefly introduced the CoSA model earlier in this report, so you probably already recognize to some degree that CoSA is a unique means of enhancing community safety while simultaneously offering support and accountability through relationships built on trust and friendship. CoSAs appear to work particularly well for persons convicted of sexual offenses and who are now returning to the community following a prison term (although research data now support use of the model with other types of offenders – see Wilson et al., 2017).

That definition is a mouthful: you might want to read it a couple of times, making sure that what you're thinking of doing in creating a CoSA is actually what CoSA is designed for. You want to be sure that there is at least a reasonably good match between your ambitions and the existing evidence base describing what works through CoSA in community re-entry and integration. The definition above includes the basic elements everyone should be thinking about before starting a CoSA. However, let's break down these important points, since they contain the essence of what CoSA is really about. The following sections outline the key elements of CoSA.

Community Safety

The overarching purpose of CoSA is to promote and enhance community safety. Lots of folks think CoSA is all about supporting persons who have sexually offended. It is, yet that's only part of what we do as a means to an end. Our real intent is to make sure there are no more victims. And that's why "*No More Victims*" is our Number One core principle, or "prime directive," if you will.

Sex Offenders as Persons

To achieve our No More Victims goal, we offer support to a *person* – not a *sex offender*, not an ex-con, not a "pedophile" – but a *person*, a human being. All too often we ignore the humanity of someone who has committed crimes, especially horrific acts like sexual offenses against those we hold most dear in our communities, including those most vulnerable, our children. In this guide, we have used what is known as "person first language," which is an attempt to focus more on the person than the behavior in which they have engaged. In that fashion, "sex offender" becomes "person who has sexually offended." It has been our experience that a good deal of the stigmatization of persons who have sexually offended lies in the labels we have applied to them, such as "sexually violent predators" and other socially loaded terms. While

we appreciate the risk posed by many persons who have sexually offended, we are also keenly mindful that the current research base regarding effective treatment and desistance (see Marshall, 2005; Maruna, 2001; Laws & Ward, 2011) demonstrates that respectful and nonconfrontational models of intervention are more likely to achieve positive outcomes regarding increased public safety and increased client reintegration potential.

Illustrative of this point, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and Anglican Archbishop (Ret.) of Johannesburg, Desmond Tutu, chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) makes this poignant observation:

What about evil, you may ask? Aren't some people just evil, just monsters, and aren't such people just unforgiveable? I do believe there are monstrous and evil acts, but I do not believe those who commit such acts are monsters or evil. To relegate someone to the level of monster is to deny that person's ability to change and to take away that person's accountability for his or her actions and behavior. . . monsters have no moral sense of right and wrong and therefore cannot be held morally culpable, cannot be regarded as morally blameworthy. This holds true for all those we wish to deem monsters.

Tutu & Tutu (2014, pp. 55-56)

No One is Disposable

Monsters cannot be held accountable, which is why we work hard at seeing and calling upon the humanity of CoSA "core members." It is a defining attribute of humanity that we can be accountable to one another. Remembering someone's essential humanity in the face of depraved behavior is not always easy; we need to work at reminding ourselves of the second core principle of CoSA, which is that *No One is Disposable*.

Only humans can be held accountable, and we want to be sure we are helping core members learn how to be accountable. We want them to be able to make lasting changes in their lives so they harm no one again, and we know that to do so, some will need help grasping a sense of their own humanity.

Accountability is the other hand of the "supporting hand," the other leg of the "leg up" we try to give to core members. Being accountable means to accept responsibility for oneself, to be transparent about one's activities and behaviors, and to possess a willingness to provide an account of one's behavior and activities. Only a fully human, fully alive, and concerned

individual can accomplish those things. Acting responsibly and being able to account for oneself is one of the goals of healthy circle activity. Support without accountability is irresponsible; accountability without support is just mean. In CoSA, we strive for balance between support and accountability, which we have enshrined in our name: Circles of Support *and* Accountability. You will want to work carefully and diligently to achieve that balance in your organization. We also know that outside of a sustaining, healthy relationship, holding someone accountable effectively is not possible.

No One Does This Alone

We suppose you could reverse the words and call it “Circles of Accountability and Support.” In fact, we frequently hear that transposition when speaking with newcomers to the idea of CoSA. Without hands-on experience in a CoSA, everyone gets the accountability part, it seems, and many want to focus on that element exclusively and worry about “support” later. Yet, as we have noted, accountability is pretty much impossible outside of a healthy relationship that also includes support in accomplishing that accountability. Simply having rules without a means by which to approach compliance in someone who has already demonstrated difficulty in adhering to those rules doesn’t make much sense. Relationships are a key feature defining a CoSA, deriving from a third core principle: *No One Does This Alone*. Think about it: Would you happily allow a total stranger to hold you to account for failing to come to a complete and absolute, timed stop at the stop sign? No, you probably would not be happy at all. But, if that feedback came from a friend, your response would likely be quite different.

Relationships Based on Friendship

Forming a relationship based on *friendship* is a concept that is foreign to many professionals working with persons who have sexually offended. As a consequence, it has been our experience that some people treat people involved with CoSA with great suspicion; particularly as volunteers and others affiliated with a CoSA project work to establish relationships with the core member based on increasing trust and an openness to building a genuine friendship. Of course, relationships, especially those built on trust and friendship, take time to develop, and need to be nurtured. There is often little in the way of a relationship between people on first meeting, let alone between a volunteer and a person who has spent many years in prison for sexual offending. Likewise, some people tend to trust others too easily, which

can also be a problem. Some people expect others to trust them immediately at first meeting, and naïve individuals may be far too willing to extend unconditional trust immediately. Trust-building is a delicate, cautious process and, indeed, there may be almost no level of trust initially. Everyone involved in CoSA, including the core member, is wary, even afraid. CoSA volunteers are people capable of remaining *open to* developing trust, as well as being *open to* developing a level of friendship over time with each other; recalling, of course, that this openness and building of trust, in addition to the hope for a level of friendship is a two-way street. We ask that people be mindful that being truly accountable requires a high level of reciprocity in the relationship. Ultimately, the degree and quality of accountability is linked to the degree and the quality of the relationship. Superficiality in one yields the same in the other.

We have seen instances in which CoSA staff and volunteers were deeply distrustful, even afraid of their core members, and were subsequently unable to bridge the distance between their fear and distrust in order to draw alongside this other human being and be willing to extend the hand of friendship (which, by the way, is not always accepted right away, there being fear and distrust on both sides). When this happens, it is often because the staff member or volunteer was not properly prepared for the task ahead, or did not accept the materials given them during their preparation. Some, we are quite certain, had experienced sexual harm in their lives or in the lives of someone very close to them. There is only one way for a person to re-enter communities after committing an act or acts of sexual violence, and that is by establishing new, healthy, respectful, and equitable relationships with others. CoSA is there to help those willing to embark on that journey. That means modeling good, healthy, and respectful relationships while demonstrating how to resolve conflicts in respectful, equitable ways. It also means modeling how to overcome fear and showing the core member through words and actions how to build trust, remain open and transparent, and be accountable. In short, through experiential learning, CoSA teaches the core member how to make friends and keep them without hurting them in any way. In those few instances where staff and volunteers have been seized by their own fear and distrust, their own sense of harm, or their own revulsion and disgust, they have reached a watershed moment.

Jean Vanier² speaks powerfully of the “wolf in us” – the place where anger, jealousy, and hatred live. In his book, *Becoming Human*, Vanier (1998) speaks of the need to delve into our own inner spaces where anger, turmoil, loneliness, fear, and violence exist, along with our need to heal – or to “tame,” as he put it – the wolf within us. A failure to do so allows the “wolf” to devour us with fear and hatred, jealousy, and greed. The vicarious trauma our staff and volunteers may experience in bearing witness to the lives of those to whom we offer support and accountability has the power to awaken Vanier’s wolf in each of us.

With the preceding thoughts in mind, it is important to recognize that not everyone is suited to the work of CoSA; it takes a special dedication to befriend someone who has committed sexual violence. Yet, it has been our experience in talking to volunteers that, when asked, they all invariably state that they do not want to see any more harm in their communities, that they are there for their children and their neighbors, and that they know intuitively that the only way to have this happen is to draw close to the one who has harmed, and try to help using the only skill they have at their disposal – their own humanity. Some readers may find the following passage helpful as they wrestle with these ideas and notions of friendship when facing a person who may have acted in ways that seem inhuman. It is also useful for those who work with the survivors of sexual and other types of violence. The Christian faith tradition of *radical hospitality* is at the heart of this philosophy:

‘My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.’ We belong in a bundle of life. We say, ‘A person is a human because I belong. I participate, I share.’ . . . Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the summum bonum - the greatest good. . . . What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me. It gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them (p. 31).” “One such universal law is that we are bound together in what the Bible calls ‘the bundle of life.’ Our humanity is caught up in that of all others. We are humans because we belong. We are made for community, for togetherness, for family, to exist in a delicate

² **Jean Vanier**, born September 10, 1928, is a Canadian Catholic philosopher, theologian, and humanitarian. In 1964 he founded L'Arche, an international federation of communities spread over 37 countries, for people with developmental disabilities and those who assist them. Among the honors he has received are the Companion of the Order of Canada (1986), Grand Officer of the National Order of Quebec (1992), French Legion of Honour (2003), Community of Christ International Peace Award (2003), the Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award (2013), and the Templeton Prize (2015).

network of interdependence. Truly ‘it is not good for man to be alone,’ [Genesis 2:18] for no one can be human alone. We are sisters and brothers of one another whether we like it or not and each one of us is a precious individual (pp. 196 & 197).

Northey (2002), in his review of *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Tutu, 1999)

Social Capital

All of this relationship and friendship building – community building – speaks to the notion of social capital. When a person is released from prison after serving many years, they often have no friends or support, perhaps, not even the good will of strangers. They have no “social capital,” and without it, as with other forms of “capital,” they find it exceptionally difficult to survive within the bounds of the law. The evaluators of the Canadian CoSA network, for instance, observed in 2014 that “social capital in the context of CoSA refers to the development of a network of connections or relationships whose reproduction leads to continuing sociability and continuous exchange” or reciprocity (Bourdieu, 1986; Chouinard & Riddick, 2015).

Social capital, the building of relationships and friendships, is also a feature of social network theory, which focuses specifically on relationships, their connections between the type and level of support within a social network, and the positive mental and physical health outcomes. The focus here is at the *social* level rather than at the psychological level, with specific attention given to the creation of social ties and *social integration* (Berkman & Glass, 2000), which is what we presume is intended as the best outcome after a person returns to the community from prison.

Principles of Risk, Need, and Responsivity

In our efforts to ensure success for individuals returning to the community after serving a sentence, there are three general but overarching principles that are evoked. Although these general principles have been traditionally applied to anyone who has been criminally convicted, they apply to persons who have sexually offended as well (see Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, & Hodgson, 2009). Although CoSA is not a “correctional practice,” *per se*, the three principles of effective correctional practice are important for CoSA practitioners to observe. The principles of *risk, need, and responsivity* (commonly referred to as “RNR” – Bonta & Andrews, 2016)

evolved from an entire psychology of criminal conduct (PCC) articulated by Dr. James Bonta and the late Dr. Donald Andrews. The *risk principle* decrees we should direct precious and scarce resources to individuals posing the highest degree of risk, such that high intensity interventions are aimed at those most likely to engage in further harmful behaviors. The risk principle incorporates a concern for community safety and the desire for no more victims.

Appropriate application of the risk principle is underscored by a research base that shows that mismatching level of risk and intensity of intervention can have dire consequences. Interestingly, this proscription against mismatching is equally important regarding under-intervening with higher risk individuals *and* over-intervening with lower risk individuals. While the former likely resonates with most people, it has been our experience that accepting the latter presents challenges. To underscore the point, the sexual violence prevention field now has technologies that allow for greater precision in risk assessment than was possible even as recently as 25 years ago. Specifically, actuarial risk assessment instruments – like the Static-99R (Hanson, Babchishin, Helmus, Thornton, & Phenix, 2016) – now permit reliable triage of persons who have sexually offended into relatively discrete groups by level of risk to reoffend. Outcome research using those risk levels has shown that, on average, rates of sexual reoffending are lower than most people believe (Hanson, Harris, Helmus & Thornton, 2014). Further, in considering those individuals judged to be at below average risk to reoffend, these research data suggest that such individuals pose little threat to community safety. Indeed, when we question what post-release services should be recommended for these below average risk folks, we should remember that the reason they have been considered below average is because they don't demonstrate many of the traits or life experiences we typically associate with elevated risk. As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

The *need principle* of the Andrews and Bonta framework indicates that effective interventions will focus on the difficulties experienced by individuals that are primarily implicated in risk to reoffend. Specifically, we have learned that people who have sexually offended usually don't only have problems in regard to sexuality, but that they also experience difficulties in other important areas of life and functioning (see Yates, Prescott, & Ward, 2010). Indeed, holistic models have all but replaced what we used to refer to as "sex offender specific" interventions. As such, we use our assessment information to highlight those areas of difficulty that may impair our core member's ability to safely establish himself in the community,

including important domains like substance abuse, poor problem-solving, a lack of prosocial influence, and sexual preoccupations (Hanson, Harris, Scott, & Helmus, 2007). Research has shown that focusing on issues unrelated to risk to reoffend has little impact on that risk to reoffend; it is more important to target those issues that are intrinsically related to future offense potential. This is an area where the circle can have important influence on the core member and his ability to remain safe and offense-free. Being aware of your core member's vulnerabilities presents opportunities to provide support and accountability in ways that are not just risk reducing, but also socially meaningful. As part of this report, we have prepared a series of videos that outline important information for people involved in CoSA. A video and PowerPoint presentation is available regarding static and dynamic risk factors.

The principle of *responsivity* is, perhaps, the one that gives us most difficulty. This principle requires interveners to consider the individuals with whom they are intervening, including focus on such important constructs as motivation to change, learning styles, and other idiosyncratic elements of the people with whom we work. Simply put, although we may have an ultimate goal – No More Victims – how we achieve that goal with our core members will require development of a respectful and encouraging relationship that fosters honesty and reciprocity. Given the current social climate regarding sexual violence and those who perpetrate it, we must remain mindful that achieving such relationships will require a lot of work; especially in overcoming the shame and frustration many released persons who have sexually offended may be experiencing generally. It has been our observation that the CoSA model is particularly well-positioned to maximize responsivity. Sexual violence treatment guru Dr. William Marshall has shown that the most effective interventions with persons who have engaged in sexual offending are those that are Warm, Empathic, Rewarding, and Directive (WERD – Marshall, 2005; Marshall, Marshall, Serran, & O'Brien, 2010). If you think about it, *WER* is all about *support* while *D* provides the necessary aspect of *accountability*.

Overall, it is our position that Circles of Support and Accountability are fully compliant with the prescriptions of the Risk-Need-Responsivity model. We provide circles to individuals who are at the higher end of the risk continuum and work with them to develop coping skills and compensatory behaviors to minimize experience of additional difficulties in areas of dynamic risk – all the while recognizing their strengths and limitations and working to assist them in establishing balanced, self-determined lifestyles free of risk for future sexual violence.

CoSA Works *Primarily* (But Not Exclusively) with Persons who have Sexually Offended

CoSA works *primarily* with persons who have sexually offended, but not *exclusively*. Some CoSA organizations (e.g., Vermont) have worked with other types of offenders with similar degrees of success. However, why the primary focus on persons who have sexually offended? Those who have worked with other types of offenders will also tell you that while they have experienced success (e.g., fewer reoffenses), they will also tell you that CoSA seems to work best with persons who have sexually offended. Also, communities are usually most concerned about people who commit sexual offenses. And rightly so, we think. A sexual offense is a harm that is most intimate, most devastating and often befalls those who are most vulnerable. Indeed, it is because of the often visceral revulsion that community members experience regarding sexual violence that people convicted of such offenses have so much difficulty finding support and other services crucial to successful community resettlement. Because most people who engage in sexual violence do so with family and friends (i.e., it is a myth that most sexual offenses involve strangers), it is understandable that many people released to the community have few options for prosocial support and guidance. This was specifically the challenge faced by Charlie and Wray when they were first released to those inaugural circles in Canada – no family, no friends – nobody wanted anything to do with them.

While some research has now been published on the effectiveness of CoSA with persons who have engaged in other types of offenses (e.g., drug offenses, nonsexual violence – see Fox, 2014; Wilson et al., 2017), the bulk of the CoSA research to date has focused on circles formed with persons who have sexually offended. In fact, CoSA's reputation in the international community draws on gains accomplished with persons who have sexually offended. That said, we do not for one moment believe that offering support and a chance to demonstrate accountability is a bad idea for anyone. It is, in fact, the essence of being in community with one another. To further underscore this point, there are a couple of sayings that illustrate our point: “No man is an island” and “We enjoy life by the help and society of others.” Each of these emphasizes the intrinsic need of human beings to band together in the face of adversity. The research literatures in health, mental health, and elsewhere are replete with examples of how problems – heart disease, depression, substance abuse, etc. – are all better approached and solved when we have others to assist us, provide support, and hold us accountable when we fall off the path.

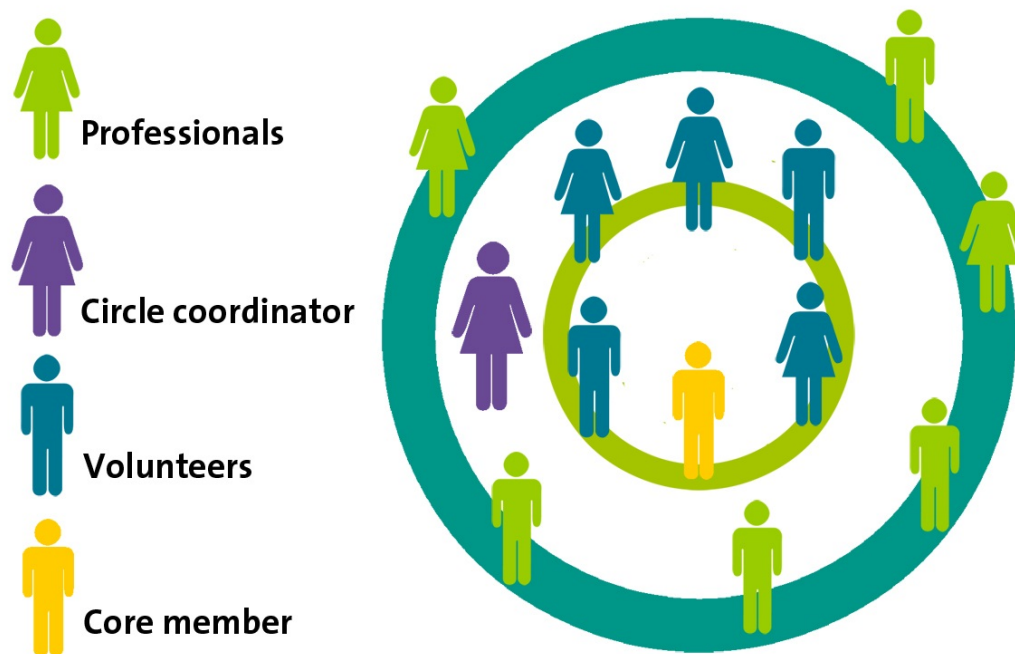
CoSA is a Local Community Response to Risk Management

Because you're reading this guide, we assume that you may be interested in offering support and accountability to a person returning to *your community*. You are a part of your community and, we hope, an active and contributing member of it. You know your community, and are known by others in it. You have a good reputation, and you know others who share your commitment to, and love for, your community. You are mobilized by your desire to enhance the health and safety of your community, and you think CoSA might be a vehicle through which you can contribute.

If you are a newcomer interested in establishing a CoSA project and don't yet know a lot about your community, this "CoSA idea" is probably not the best way to introduce yourself and your many capabilities to your neighbors. You'll need to get a few people involved who are well-known and trusted members of the community. Indeed, you are going to need support (remember, no one does this alone) and you will need to be transparent and accountable as you proceed. CoSA is not just about supporting and holding core members accountable; your own support network and your own accountability are crucial. One of the most important social learning tools any society has is social modeling – modeling healthy, safe ways of living is what you and your compatriots undertake as CoSA volunteers. Being able to model healthy relationships is a critical part of CoSA work.

If your community is your church, you likely draw strength from your faith and a sense of purpose from your fellow congregants. However, you will need a broader base than that; the people who will be affected by your aspirations regarding CoSA are more than the people who attend your church. Ultimately, establishing a viable CoSA project will involve bringing together a variety of stakeholders in what we usually refer to as a "steering group" or "advisory committee." This is, perhaps, one of the first steps in establishing a viable CoSA environment (see Appendix G – Logic Model). This will require you to reach out to other stakeholders in your community who are involved in sexual violence prevention, which will include local law enforcement, probation and parole, victim advocates, treatment providers, and others with expert knowledge and experience. Actually, you may find that many of the sorts of people who populate your steering group or advisory committee are the same as those who will ultimately be effective in the outer circle of professionals we noted above and describe in more detail in the next section.

Figure 1: The Twin Circles of CoSA (adapted from the original Canadian model by our colleagues in the Netherlands)



The “Twin Circles” of CoSA

People who have reservations about CoSA often think of circles as a haphazard collection of “do-gooders” attempting to work with a population of individuals who can be very dangerous and who would be better managed (and contained) by professionals who know what those risks are. What these same critics will see on closer examination (and if you build your CoSA carefully) is that a Circle of Support and Accountability, properly fashioned, is really two circles functioning in unison, as depicted in Figure 1. There is an “outer circle” of knowledgeable and experienced professionals supporting (and holding accountable) an “inner circle” comprised of between three and five volunteers and a core member. You can see how this follows the CoSA principle of “No One Does This Alone.”

As suggested in the prior section, it is critical to the successful development and maintenance of your CoSA project that this “outer circle” be assembled and meet regularly *long before* other work is undertaken. For instance, you will need a strong “outer circle” before you attempt to recruit, screen, train, and deploy volunteers and, certainly, before you can start to

recruit a core member and form an inner circle. As we've noted, the function of the outer circle can be formalized into a board of directors, or be constituted in a less formal way as a steering committee or an advisory panel. What we have seen working well in other communities is a sponsoring or stewardship organization such as a church, a multi-faith organization, or a non-governmental organization (e.g., in the U.S., this would likely be a not-for-profit or 501(c)(3) organization). Such organizations have the benefit of being already established and busy in the community with an established governance board (e.g., a board of directors) that agrees to take on a CoSA project, perhaps as an extension of the work they are already doing and, in the process, establishes a steering committee or advisory panel comprised of professionals as described above. In the original CoSA project in Canada, this sponsoring or stewardship organization was the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario. In Durham, NC, the analogous organization has been Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham. Regardless of who or what becomes the sponsoring or stewarding agent, the key here is that the CoSA should be:

a) Community-based

- Historically, CoSA is of, from, and for the community itself, which we have emphasized must ultimately take a big part of the responsibility for its own safety.
- Remember the great quote from Jane Jacobs (1961) that we included above regarding the community's responsibility to participate in maintaining the "public peace."
- Similarly, remember Nils Christie's (1977) thoughts about ensuring that communities have an opportunity to confront conflict and to learn from their experiences of solving those difficulties, either on their own or in collaboration with statutory agencies like probation, parole, or police services.
- In the spirit of Jacobs and Christie, CoSA's origins lie in the *community's* response to potential hazards in its midst, as it seeks to work collaboratively with mandated agencies to secure community health and safety.

b) Volunteer-driven

- Closely related to the point above, volunteers are simply community members who want to contribute in a meaningful way to the health and safety of the whole. They are not paid professionals (whom we already have in the form of police, probation

officers, and other specialists – outer circle); although we expect that our volunteers will work collaboratively with those professionals.

- As someone who wants to start a CoSA project in your area, you will soon discover that finding, screening, and training volunteers (more on that in a moment), is going to be your most challenging task. You will discover that good volunteers are worth their weight in gold. Your goal is to deploy those precious resource people in a way that most effectively achieves your prime directive: No More Victims! You could cheat (people have tried) and match your volunteers with low-risk offenders who are easy to work with, but you will also discover that you are having almost no effect in terms of helping these people make changes in their lives; they probably don't need to change much anyway, which is one reason they are low-risk to begin with – remember our comments about the Risk and Need Principles above.

Targeting lower risk individuals with few criminogenic needs for CoSA will also not get you much in terms of enhancing your community's safety. Why? Because you ignored those high-risk individuals who could have really benefited from your help, some of whom will likely go on to reoffend.

c) Professionally guided

- Professionals are the folks who are trained and experienced and know what the risks are. Ideally, they should also be from the community and contribute to the CoSA voluntarily; although you may sometimes have to purchase services in exceptional circumstances. Professionals help with training (and sometimes screening) volunteers, selecting core members, and solving problems. This group needs to be active, convening at minimum on a quarterly basis if not monthly, and whenever the need arises in between. This is also where your CoSA Project Coordinator will also need to be active; especially in ensuring that communication flows smoothly between the two circles.

From the above, you can see where your preparation time is best spent at the beginning of a CoSA project. You need a home, a home organization, and a reliable, functioning “outer circle” made up of people who collectively *understand and firmly support* what you are doing, with whom you want to work, where you will be located, and how you wish to interact and

collaborate with other members of the community and local professionals. We suggest strongly that those professionals see CoSA as their opportunity to be involved in an act of community engagement; CoSA, we would further suggest, is among the best examples of community engagement – a means for direct involvement in providing good information to members of the community in terms of what they do as professionals, and what sexual offending is like in your community. Most professionals will leap at the opportunity.

Ultimately, the outer circle is a safety net. Take the time necessary to assemble it thoughtfully and carefully and do not, under any circumstances, rush this part of your preparation. Keep in mind that proposing and establishing a CoSA project may raise some eyebrows at first. Not every person who will ultimately be an ally in your endeavors will immediately see themselves as such. In CoSA, we work with individuals who are at the highest levels of risk and need – the sort of people who most community members would naturally shun. You can expect that many of the folks who will be your key collaborators (e.g., law enforcement, probation and parole, victim advocates) will be initially suspicious of your intents and abilities to influence community safety. By way of example, when a CoSA group tried to establish itself in Ottawa, ON in Canada, they were initially met by great skepticism and derision from members of police services. Only after sitting down with officers and managers, explaining in great detail what exactly it was that the CoSA group was trying to accomplish, were they able to gain a modicum of respect. In the end, the Chief of the Ottawa Police Service provided a letter of recommendation that has since been used to assist in discussions with law enforcement officials in other locales.

This is likely also a good point at which to make a really critical point. Once you have developed a strong working relationship with your community partners, remember that those relationships can disappear the moment you don't hold true to your intents. From time to time, core members on supervision or other judicial orders will experience difficulties, such as violations of drug or alcohol prohibitions, contact with potential victims, or experience of offense-approach cognitions or behaviors. Any core member who is subject to conditions in the community should understand from the beginning of his time in a circle that his volunteers will not stand idly by and watch him fail. Issues that need to be reported to the appropriate authorities must be reported to the appropriate authorities, without exception. Any failure by a circle to apprise case managers of violations of supervision orders will undoubtedly spell the end of the

trust relationship your project has with that agency, and likely others affiliated with your project. And, in the end, what positive outcome could possibly come from sheltering or colluding with a core member who is clearly experiencing difficulties in need of professional attention or monitoring?

CoSA Coordinator

Looking at the diagram in Figure 1, between the inner circle and outer circle stands a figure. This is the CoSA Coordinator. The person in this role coordinates the workings of the outer circle and the inner circle. The coordinator position may be defined and operationalized differently depending on how the CoSA is organized internally. We provide a generic job description for the CoSA Coordinator position in *Appendix B*. For example, the coordinator ordinarily reports to the Chair of the local Steering Committee, or to the Chair of the Board of Directors, depending on how the CoSA is governed.

The CoSA Coordinator position is the lynch-pin of any CoSA organization. This person becomes the public face for the CoSA organization; so, choosing the right person to fulfill this role is vital to the success of CoSA in your community. CoSA Coordinators must be willing to spend a lot of their time out of their office and in the community. This person must be comfortable making “cold calls” to potential CoSA partners and resource persons and their respective agencies. As such, when choosing a potential coordinator you are looking for a person who is outgoing, other-oriented, gregarious, professionally engaging, and smart. Your coordinator would likely also benefit from having verifiable experience successfully coordinating volunteers in other organizations. It would be preferred if they have at least a working knowledge of the criminal justice system and, above all, they must not be afraid of working alongside people who have committed sexual crimes. At the same time, the coordinator must be someone who is aware of risk, knows how to manage it, and can motivate others to become involved in the “work” of CoSA – forming relationships based on developing trust and friendship with core members – while remaining safe.

We have developed a separate resource document for CoSA Coordinators called, “A Guide for New CoSA Coordinators.” That guide is intended to help people new to the coordinator position understand their role more thoroughly. We wrote the New Coordinators guide in response to individuals who, upon stepping into the coordinator role for the first time, told us they had nothing that delineated their unique duties. And while the new coordinator guide

covers some of the same material as is contained in this “How To” guide, it should be read alongside this guide, and not instead of this guide.

CORE MEMBERS

When a person is released from prison, the normal expectation is that she or he will peacefully re-enter society and integrate with the community. Remember that we often say “integrate” rather than “re-integrate,” based on experience that the returning individual (like the first core member Charlie who we talked about at the beginning of this guide) was not always integrated – or was at least poorly or inappropriately integrated – with the community when s/he offended. Also, many returning persons are coming to new communities, because they may have “burned bridges” in their home or former communities. Indeed, one of the common selection criteria for potential core members has been that they have little or no prosocial supports in the community. As one Canadian Core member observed,

When [I came] out of prison, I found that I don't belong anywhere. I don't belong in the city that I used to live in. I don't belong in this city where I moved. I don't belong anywhere. My friends are all gone; you have no more friends, and so Circles of Support is kind of like that anchor that you can hold on to. They're people that you know; they're people that you can get on the phone and contact.

Coming to a community after prison, especially after having committed sexual offenses, can be an enormous, often overwhelming challenge, amplified by the fact that there are likely new obligations in the returning person's life. For example, those returning to communities must often report immediately and regularly – sometimes daily – to a probation or parole officer, and may also need to visit local law enforcement offices to register as a sexual offender or sexual predator. In addition, there are almost always strict limitations on movement and associations, including where a returning person can and cannot live. Returning from prison, the individual likely has no employment, little money, and few prospects for community stability. Depending on how long he was incarcerated, he may not know how to use public transportation to get to meetings, food banks, and other supports. And, these are only some of the external and observable stressors common in establishing a life after prison.

There are unseen stressors as well. These are less likely to be talked about, recognized, or acknowledged. These might include shame over the crime(s) committed, fear of reoffending, fear of how the victim(s) and community may react, and what they are going to say, if and when they are confronted. There may also be stress associated with securing employment, which is

intrinsically linked to a sense of self-worth and a desire not to appear dependent or as a “drag” on society, even if there is double-digit unemployment in a community. There are other demands to “fit in” and to “appear normal.” Many persons formerly incarcerated sense that everyone is looking at them, are convinced that everyone knows what they did, and that they have just gotten out of prison or jail. This makes many individuals who have been recently released so afraid of going out that they stay indoors and isolate themselves. Depression, anxiety, anger, and fear are often some of the core feelings returning individuals carry with them each day they are in the community following incarceration. Social isolation and loneliness are known dynamic risk factors (Hanson et al., 2007; Mann, Hanson, & Thornton, 2010). Too many recently released individuals try too hard to get a job, re-kindle family relationships, go back to school, and get into an intimate relationship all at once. They move too fast and “burn out”, which can be dangerous for individuals with offense histories.

Easing those pressures, setting and managing reasonable expectations, slowing things down, and helping to take care of pragmatic things (clothing, food, basic safety – think of Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs” [1943]) are what the circle can do best in those early days. The literature regarding success upon community release indicates that good planning can spell the difference between success and failure (Willis & Grace, 2008, 2009). Getting off to a good start can be crucial to eventual success on release. In a sense, the circle is the first community the returning person can try to “integrate” with – just four or five volunteers, not the 350,000 citizens right outside the door. CoSA invites a core member into a small, manageable, and intentional community; this is a core member’s first step toward building his own community network. You’ll remember that this group of three to five volunteers plus the core member is referred to as the “*inner circle*.”

Referral and Recruitment of Core Members

I used to have a friend in prison and he used to say to me, “How long would it take me to adjust to the street because everything’s changed?” And I used to say, “Oh, a couple of days,” and then eventually I said, “Well, a week.” Now I know the answer is never. I’ll never really catch up. Those 17 years are lost.

Core member selection should begin while a prospective core member is still in prison and at most one year prior to release to your community. At a minimum, and where possible and

feasible, recruitment should not begin less than six months prior to release. Your work prior to accepting any core members by engaging with the appropriate releasing authority (most likely parole and probation departments) is critical to the success of this part of CoSA work. These officials will need to know who you are, who your volunteers are, what your motivation is, and how you intend to operate. Ideally, they may become resources who can assist you with aspects of volunteer training. Once these officials know who you are and trust your intents, they will be ready to refer and you will be ready to screen core members for suitability and availability. The collaboration begins to work and you, as community members, are ready to pitch in and do your part in the best interests of community health and safety.

Meeting monthly (or as frequently as necessary) with your Steering Committee and the appropriate referring department or officials in your area to review the forthcoming releases of prospective core members should become a well-established practice. There are privacy concerns you will need to negotiate with those officials, who may be reluctant at first to share information with you. Having carefully and strategically recruited members of your Steering Committee, you will have some friends there who can help with this part. In some communities with whom we have worked, a prison chaplain has been of assistance. Remember, the success of your project ultimately lies in the relationships you have taken the time to develop and nurture.

You will learn in the next section regarding volunteers that finding an adequate number of effective volunteers can be a full-time occupation for CoSA Coordinators. The demand for a circle is often greater than the ready supply of a sufficient number of volunteers who are screened, trained, and ready for deployment to a CoSA. This makes each circle a precious resource. That said, there is little doubt that many or most people who leave prison could benefit from having their own CoSA; especially if they have served lengthy sentences. Indeed, a former Commissioner of Corrections in Canada once declared that all inmates, whether persons who have sexually offended or not, should have a CoSA upon release. The trouble, however, is that it is unlikely there could never be enough circles to go around.

So, how do we choose who gets a circle and who does not, when the supply is so scarce? Earlier, we discussed the three principles of Risk, Need, and Responsivity. Now we are about to see the first two of these – Risk and Need – applied in the real, non-theoretical world of CoSA. Those most requiring services are those who are at the highest risk of causing more harm; those

individuals who have the greatest criminogenic needs (i.e., “needs” that are directly linked to criminal behavior). Risk and criminogenic needs are intrinsically linked. In selecting core members, CoSA typically looks at those people coming from prison to the community who are at the higher end of the risk continuum and who concomitantly have the highest preponderance of needs. Having that high-risk/high-need qualifier as a selection criterion not only winnows the list, but focuses CoSA squarely on applying its limited resources to those with the greatest need and potential to cause harm in the community.

There is a further evidence-based reason for focusing on the highest risk, greatest need individuals, which we noted earlier. Providing services to lower and low-risk individuals, even though they may be easier to work with, runs the risk of making them worse by imposing restrictions and structures on individuals who were already doing okay. There are at least two good reasons why we need to consider this very real possibility in related to CoSA: 1.) CoSA is a high-intensity intervention that lower and low-risk individuals do not need, and 2.) mixing lower and low-risk individuals with higher and high-risk people tends to *increase* the risk of the lower risk persons.

It is also likely true that lower risk, lower need individuals are not generally the people your community is most concerned about. The high-risk individuals are often repeat offenders – they have “done it” again, your community is likely worried they will continue to “do it” some more, and the research literature tends to support that fear. These are the individuals who genuinely need a CoSA, and we recommend you provide these needy – and risky – individuals with your usually limited resources. Some people regard these recommendations with cynicism, believing the higher or highest risk individuals will never go willingly into a circle; suggesting that that is one of the features that makes them high-risk in the first place! Our experience of circles internationally has shown the opposite to be true, and research with CoSA participants has shown that they typically have higher scores on measures of antisociality than those who are not targeted for CoSA involvement (see Wilson et al., 2009). Sure, there are the highly entrenched antisocial types who might not have CoSA as their first thought (but ask anyway, and more than once if necessary!), but antisociality isn’t the only defining feature of an individual at high-risk. It is not uncommon for even high-risk/high-need individuals to also be disgusted by their own sexually or otherwise violent behavior. Some of these individuals are also afraid that they won’t be able to resist their own inappropriate desires upon release. Many have experienced

failure on prior releases. By way of example, think of a highly pedophilic guy who is attracted exclusively to preteen children, primarily boys. Or, the man who cannot resist teenage girls, who thinks of himself as a teenager-at-heart, and who believes many 15-year-old girls would really like to “date.” Many such individuals will be on life-long supervision and have their opportunities to reoffend severely limited through processes of statutory containment. In those U.S. jurisdictions where sex offender civil commitment is in vogue, many identified “sexually violent predators/persons” face long-term involuntary placement in a secure treatment facility with little to no chance of release (see Brandt, Wilson, & Prescott, 2015). In spite of scenarios like civil commitment, it is a truism that most persons who have sexually offended do eventually return to the community and, when they do, they will need more than a probation officer and treatment provider to be successful.

To be a CoSA core member, the individual must accept some degree of responsibility for the harm he has done in the community; even if that acceptance of responsibility falls short of full admission of guilt. We firmly believe that it is difficult for volunteers in a circle to effectively ensure accountability from someone who says he didn’t do anything wrong. Circles do not rely on polygraphs, and we are fully aware that some persons who have sexually offended may not always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about their sexual offending history. While we would prefer a core member to be thoroughly transparent with his circle about his offense history, we recommend “accepting responsibility” be interpreted as “for the most part.” For instance, a person who can say, “I did molest one/some of those kids, but not all they say I did” is someone we would recommend get a circle (and be in treatment). Or, “I know what I did was really wrong, but she did agree at first [that] we could have sex and, then I couldn’t stop myself.” These beliefs may not pass muster in some treatment programs, but they are sufficient to allow a person to join a circle. Often enough, while a core member may not be fully forthcoming in the circle at first, after trust begins to be established, it is sometimes surprising how transparent he becomes.

A third criterion is that the returning offender must be a willing participant – remember that CoSA is strongly rooted in voluntariness. The core member needs to know what a circle is, who it’s made up of, how it works, and what his commitments and expectations will be. He needs to know what a covenant is, and be willing to enter into one with his circle (see forthcoming section on “Covenants,” as well as the video and PowerPoint presentation on this

topic). Sufficiently informed, a core member consents voluntarily to join a circle. We have seen situations where core members have been “ordered” to join a circle, “or else.” Courts have tried this; correctional officials, parole and probation officers, and even treatment specialists have tried to force a person into becoming a core member or face a stiffer sentence, not be released, or endure increased supervision or even the revocation of supervision. In every case, the circle failed, or disbanded within a short time. It sounds like a cliché, but for a circle to work, everyone in the circle – including and maybe even especially the core member – must be personally invested in making it work. It doesn’t work when a core member passes his time in a circle by saying, “My PO made me come here, so here I am; she didn’t tell me I had to say anything, and go shove your covenant!”

The reality is that nothing works as smoothly as we describe it. You may feel pressured to take certain core members. Your first referrals may come months after your presentations to parole, probation, and treatment providers – all of whom thought you went away. Persistence pays off, as does sticking to your beliefs and intents. Experience has shown that there is a right – and a wrong – way to do this.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart and soul of CoSA. We can only imagine what might have happened had Rev. Nigh not *volunteered* to assist Charlie way back in 1994. The risk prognostications were alarming and his track record was poor, to say the least. Since that inaugural circle, many hundreds – if not thousands, of community members have volunteered to sit in a circle with an individual convicted of sexual offenses, with the goal of No More Victims. We have said elsewhere that good volunteers are worth their weight in gold, and we reiterate that point here. As much as a well-functioning CoSA project looks after its core members, it must also attend to the health and wellbeing of its volunteers. As part of this U.S. DOJ package, we have also prepared a video and PowerPoint presentation on Self-Care and Burnout. We encourage you and your CoSA colleagues to review those materials.

Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

Forging the inner circle means recruiting suitable volunteers. Unfortunately, the reality is that not everyone who wants to be a CoSA volunteer can actually be one. So, what makes a person a “suitable” volunteer? Even amongst small CoSA projects or groups just starting up, recruiting volunteers is often a full-time job. This is especially the case after you have three or more circles operational and want to expand to a vital community operation with ten or more circles running at any time. Your ability to recruit suitable, qualified volunteers will be the primary brake or limitation on how big your CoSA project will become. Volunteer recruitment is not easy by any means. Seasoned CoSA volunteer coordinators will agree: volunteer recruitment is likely the most time-consuming occupation they have. It often becomes a focus – if not an obsession – of their day-to-day activities. As one coordinator once put it, “It seems as if I spend most of my time in coffee shops, in church basements and halls, trying to convince people that volunteering for CoSA is a good thing.” However, one thing is for sure, those coordinators who have a knack for cajoling people into volunteering are easily the most effective in their jobs. In this regard, the project in Durham, North Carolina³ is a fine example. Their coordinator has been particularly successful in recruiting volunteers and, as such, CoSA has become an important partner in the risk management landscape of that community.

³ Durham, NC was one of two sites funded by US DOJ as part of its CoSA initiative in 2012.

Many CoSA Coordinators new to the job report that they had originally felt their time would be consumed by their core members; helping high-risk persons who have sexually offended overcome their myriad day-to-day challenges. While this is true sometimes, most accomplished managers and coordinators quickly learn that their main daily focus is on getting the next batch of volunteers ready for the next core member joining their CoSA project.

If you choose to initiate a CoSA project, you will soon learn that, although eminently time-consuming, *recruiting* volunteers is only half the battle. Volunteers need to be interviewed, screened, trained, supervised, provided with additional training, and formally recognized for their valued contribution not just to core members but also to the health and safety of their community. CoSA Coordinators are fully engaged, as the title suggests, in “coordinating” all aspects of the volunteer program that is the heart and soul of CoSA. When we say that CoSA is a community’s response to the return of persons of risk to the community, volunteers are the embodiment of that community response; they represent or reflect their communities and their values to the core member, as well as to other citizens. For the coordinator, this means creating strategies and developing opportunities in a very real and focused way, through which to *engage* their community.

Generally, it has been our experience that the highest volume of potential volunteers can be found among the various facets of a town’s faith community. However, they can also be found through the local Volunteer Recruitment Center, by word-of-mouth, by contacts made during public speaking tours or public forums, by attending advanced graduate classes at the local college or university, and by making use of newspaper and electronic media advertisements. A CoSA Coordinator’s dogged dedication and creative approach to volunteer recruitment is integral to a successful CoSA.

In short, a CoSA Coordinator must be prepared to turn the town upside down in his/her search for volunteers. However, who exactly are you looking for? In this next part, we will describe some of the key attributes of potential CoSA volunteers. You may want to add more points as your own experience grows, yet we would strongly recommend that the elements described here remain as the core of your volunteer recruitment strategy and guidelines.

To begin with, your volunteers should be members of the local community and be able to demonstrate that they are in good standing with their fellow citizens. Some indicators for identifying potential volunteers follow.

Well Known and Stable in the Community. Helping an individual released from prison re-enter community can be a tall order. It is even taller if you or your volunteers have no connection to the community. If you are just finding your own way in the community, it will be almost impossible to help another person with a lot more against him to accomplish the same task. Imagine being at a community meeting and suggesting to those in attendance that this CoSA idea is a good one for the community to take on, and someone asks, “Who are you? We don’t know you. Are you from around here?” To be fair, not many of us are all that well known in our community-at-large these days, and though we have lived on the same street for 20 or more years, we might be asked the same question. We would be able to respond, though, by saying that we have lived in the community for a significant length of time, which would be better than saying, “Well, I moved here six months ago, from Smithville, but only lived there for a year.” If you are part of a faith community, however, or a member of the state sex offender management board, or have volunteered elsewhere in the community, chances are that people will know you and can vouch for you. The following points are offered as a way to help you locate suitable volunteers.

- a. Aim for a balance in potential volunteers in terms of gender, age, and experience.
- b. Ideally, volunteers should reside in the community in which the CoSA is to be formed.
- c. Their residence in that community should be stable (i.e., have resided there for two years or more).
- d. They should not be looking to CoSA as a stepping-stone towards employment in the criminal justice field; although some students may have this as a dual reason for volunteering.
- e. They should be very familiar with the community in general and what it offers in terms of employment, housing, mental health and addiction services, places of worship, government, and recreational opportunities. Some may be relative newcomers to a

community themselves, but still be known within the community and demonstrate their intention to remain in the community for the foreseeable future.

- f. Some CoSA projects have found that mature graduate students, recruited early in their graduate study programs, make excellent volunteers. Caution must be exercised, however, in terms of the type of core member they will be paired with, who their fellow volunteers are likely to be (e.g., older, younger), and whether it is their intention to remain in the community following graduation.

Maturity. While this quality is difficult to specify, we are generally referring to someone with sufficient life experience to offer mentorship and guidance to another adult around problem-solving skills and conflict. They should also be able to demonstrate an adult sense of emotional “maturity” and a general awareness of the issues surrounding crime and sexual offending. A mature individual is also unthreatened by new experiences and is open to learning new skills.

Age. Wisdom and balance are needed when developing a volunteer team. Selecting volunteers across age groups can be helpful if the volunteers have the general maturity and the ability to work with the core members. Certainly, underage people (e.g., youth and children) must never be included as part of a CoSA, and even young emerging adults (e.g., under age 25) may not represent good volunteer candidates.

Balanced Lifestyle. Potential volunteers should have other interests outside of criminal justice and should not be reliant on CoSA as their primary interest. A good question to ask during a screening interview is, “What other interests, such as hobbies, sports, recreational activities, do you have, and where would CoSA fit into that?” See a sample Volunteer Interview format in *Appendix C*.

Balanced Perspective. Potential volunteers should have a balanced point of view when it comes to criminal offending and, specifically, sexual offending. Let’s face it, though: most community members do not hold balanced perspectives. They are flooded with myths around general and sexual offending each day. Potential volunteers must be able to recognize the often-profound needs of victims and survivors of sexual violence, and yet also have the capacity to recognize the humanity of offenders, some of whom have also been victimized in their earlier lives. For instance, volunteers who seem only interested in supporting core members without also wanting to hold them accountable should probably be screened out unless they are able to

demonstrate their understanding, willingness, and capacity to require accountability of that same core member, and *vice versa*.

Personal “Victim Issues” Satisfied. Experience and research have shown that crime has victimized many people. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017), an ongoing, nationally representative telephone survey that collects information about sexual violence, stalking victimization, and intimate partner violence among adult women and men ages 18 and older in the United States, has reported estimates of the prevalence of sexual violence based on 16,507 completed interviews (9,086 women and 7,421 men). They estimate that in 2010 nearly 1 in 5 women (18.3 percent) and 1 in 71 men (1.4 percent) had been raped in their lifetime. About one-half (51.1 percent) of female rape victims reported being victimized by an intimate partner, while 40.8 percent reported being victimized by an acquaintance. More than 4 in 10 (42.2 percent) female rape victims experienced their first completed rape before age 18. More than 1 in 4 (27.8 percent) male rape victims experienced their first rape victimization when they were age 10 or younger (for more information, see Office of Justice Programs [2015]).

The statistics in the preceding paragraph suggest that many potential volunteers are likely to have experienced sexual assault or know someone close to them who has. In fact, when asked if we ever intentionally include victims in our CoSA groups (given that very generally speaking, CoSA is based on the principles of restorative justice), we often say, “No, not intentionally,” and then quickly add, “Though we always assume there are folks in the room with this experience in their background.” While we don’t actively recruit survivors for the inner circle, we do our very best to ensure the outer circle has representation from the victim/survivor advocacy community. Indeed, their participation in CoSA is critical to the success of the project. Just a cautionary note regarding offense and re-offense rates: It is very likely that our estimates – taken from the research record and police reporting data – will always be confounded by the fact that a majority of sexual assaults are not reported to police or other agents who have statutory responsibility to do something about those disclosures.

We wish to be very clear that being a survivor of sexual assault does not disqualify a person from volunteering for CoSA. Yet, care must be taken and additional screening provided for people with that potentially traumatic personal history, as we do not want to put anyone in a

position wherein they may be retraumatized. While we accept that some potential volunteers may not be entirely forthcoming about their experiences, they should nonetheless be asked in a direct yet sensitive manner whether they or a close family member has had an experience as a victim of violent crime, including a sexual crime. This inquiry should extend to the volunteer's immediate family (e.g., Have you or any members of your immediate family been the victim of a sex crime?). If a history of victimization is found, careful and sensitive interviewing should attempt to determine if the applicant is capable of functioning as an effective volunteer. Under no circumstances should a volunteer expect to resolve victim issues through working with CoSA.

Project managers and coordinators are often nervous about this element of volunteer screening, partly because they genuinely do not want to cause further harm or retraumatize someone, and partly because many people have little experience talking about sexual matters directly and openly. Affording the question its proper context is crucial: “We are seeking to come alongside a person who has perpetrated at least one sexual offense; so, we have some very sensitive questions we need to ask of you, and which you don’t need to answer if you choose not to.” If someone declines to answer, then you are faced with a decision. This is where your training itinerary helps. It is a weeks-long process during which you get to see your volunteers over an extended period of time. You will see how they respond to the material presenting in training workshops, hear their questions, and observe their reactions to the replies. In our experience, people who are unsuitable as volunteers typically make themselves obvious during the screening and training processes.

Ultimately, however, you may be faced with a situation in which someone has rightfully declined to share something private with you. If, at the end of your volunteer training you are still unsure, it may be because you don’t have all the information you need to assess this particular volunteer’s potential impact on his or her co-volunteers, or on the core member’s safety. You could re-interview to see if the volunteer in question, having been exposed to the full training itinerary, would now decide to share. If he or she still declines, be frank. Tell them why you are asking the questions; volunteers who have experienced sexual violence in their lives may volunteer for CoSA after appropriate due diligence has been performed with regard to their motivation and their safety and what your uncertainty is about. In the end, you may have to decline the person’s services as a volunteer in a circle; however, keep in mind that there are other ways to volunteer in CoSA.

Prior Criminal History. First, we are not opposed to individuals with criminal justice histories participating in CoSA as volunteers. However, for the health of your CoSA project and the protection of the prospective volunteer who acknowledges a prior criminal history, we need to know if their status (number of years' offense-free in the community, parole or probation status, registration under the *Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act* [2006], and so forth) permits or prohibits them from volunteering. If there are no impediments, we strongly recommend that the interview process establish the applicant's willingness to be open and frank about his or her past offense history. Such openness is required of core members, and CoSA volunteers must be willing to meet the same standard. While an applicant with a history of sexual offending is not necessarily excluded, an interview process should be instituted that carefully examines the applicant's attitudes toward women, men, including the LGBTQ community, and alternate sexualities, as well as to explore any tendency to minimize the history or the effects of sexual misconduct. Attitudes toward police, correctional officials and the courts should also be examined.

In addition to the above, any volunteer applicant with a criminal justice history should be asked to provide two references from a non-related community member of good standing *who is also fully aware of the applicant's past*. These references should attest to the applicant's length of time offense-free in the community, as well as the applicant's current stability and crime-free lifestyle. Once again, each case should be decided individually. A final decision should be made through referring the matter to the steering committee, advisory panel or board of governance discussed earlier.

We are well aware that some criminal justice officials will object to persons with criminal histories becoming involved with CoSA, especially if those histories involved sexual offenses against children. Their concerns ought to be taken seriously and their advice sought. However, CoSA stands for the safe and humane integration to the community of people formerly incarcerated for sexual offending, and the model endorses the healing principles of restorative justice. These considerations must be balanced with the greater need for community safety when making decisions whether or not to include or exclude an applicant from volunteering within CoSA. Clearly, some former offenders may contribute uniquely and powerfully to CoSA. While blanket rules are not always helpful, and we urge the case-by-case decision-making model, policies, procedures, and even legislation in rare cases may prohibit people still under

supervision from associating with former felons, and CoSA should remain compliant with these prohibitions.

In any case, we strongly counsel new CoSA initiatives not to “cut their teeth” in their communities on controversy. For the first few years, we advise newly established groups not to incorporate former offenders in their practice. As they gain credibility in their communities and solidify trust-building between themselves and their fellow citizens, including professionals like police, sheriffs, community corrections, and treatment providers, they may decide when the time has come to allow select former offenders to contribute to their practice. We suggest that this be a thoughtful process that involves discussion amongst members of the Steering Group or Advisory Panel. As many of our CoSA colleagues remind us, we believe in the principles of restorative justice and that no one is disposable. If we are truly committed to those principles, how can we not include in our midst those have walked the walk to redemption and are restored as contributing citizens? We counsel that this laudable notion be tempered by a new group’s need to get its feet planted on the solid ground of experience gained over time before moving toward greater challenges.

Further on this issue of potentially accepting volunteer with former criminal offending histories, hopeful volunteers with such histories should have initiated full and voluntary disclosures, and be prepared to make full and voluntary disclosures to fellow volunteers, if necessary. An individual’s history should *not* be something a volunteer screener discovers accidentally, say, through a reference check. Transparency and honesty is what we expect of all volunteers and core members alike.

We have often been asked if there is a particular length of time after release, or after completion of supervision, before a former offender should apply to volunteer for CoSA. Our advice is to wait for the latter – completion of supervision and status as a free citizen in the community (SORNA compliance notwithstanding). Then, a “rule-of-thumb” is to wait a further five years. If you feel a little squeamish about arbitrary rules, firmer ground can be found in the empirical research on recidivism risk. There is continuing research exploring the relationship between time free in the community and risk (see Hanson et al., 2014; Hanson, Harris, Letourneau, Helmus, & Thornton, in press). Further, there is a general principle that for every five years a person who has offended sexually has been free in the community without

committing a new sexual offense, his risk to reoffend roughly halves (Hanson et al., 2014, in press). The same authors also report that after 10 years in the community without a new sexual offense, risk begins to approximate that of non-offending individuals in the community. Nevertheless, a thorough background check is mandatory for former offenders who are also prospective CoSA volunteers. And one other thing: it is our belief that when former offenders contribute positively to their community, they increase their bond with the community and thus build social capital. There is good evidence from the Canadian CoSA experience that social capital acts as a powerful protective factor against future criminal activity.

Following due diligence on the part of the CoSA organization, persons who previously engaged in sexual violence, as well as those who have survived sexual violence, may volunteer with CoSA. No one is disposable.

Offense Type. Some potential volunteers might have greater difficulties working with offenders who have committed particular crimes, such as those involving children. Exploring the applicant's needs and point of view is important. However, difficulty with a certain type of crime should not necessarily disqualify an applicant. Each case should be decided individually, and the needs of the volunteer respected and, where possible, accommodated. If it is not possible to respect and accommodate a volunteer's wishes, he/she may have to re-apply later, or be satisfied with placement on a wait list.

Sexual Orientation. It is also necessary to discuss with potential volunteers their attitudes toward working with core members whose sexual orientation may differ from their own. In a world growing socially more complex in terms of the needs of people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer – the LGBTQ community – some volunteers (and even CoSA Coordinators) may feel challenged. Education in the form of appropriate training and introduction to the life experiences of those who may not find a good fit in a gendered or “straight” world can only help. Yet, it will likely be difficult to ensure that every potential volunteer is matched with a group and a core member who share their outlook in a complex sexual world, which is part of the reason for emphasizing “balance” in lifestyle and perspective. At this point you are likely beginning to understand that finding good and suitable volunteers is very hard work. Volunteers are a precious resource, and turning someone away because they choose not to work with a homosexual (or bisexual, Trans, or someone just confused and

questioning their sexuality) core member might be overlooking a precious and valuable contributor to your initiative.

Faith and Non-Faith Communities. We recommend that local faith communities be approached for help in recruiting volunteers, as it has been our experience that people of faith tend to be more open to volunteering. While volunteers do not necessarily have to belong to a faith community (indeed, there are many who do not), volunteers from the faith community often bring with them a set of core values that support CoSA values. That said, we also provide a caveat when it comes to faith-based initiatives working with the re-entry of offenders, perhaps even especially with persons who have sexually offended. Many persons who have sexually offended have histories of abuse at the hands of faith-based organizations. While still keeping faith with core values, the proselytizing of any faith must be prohibited, whether expressed overtly or covertly. It is one thing for a core member to ask for support in finding a local congregation to which he can belong, but it is quite another for a volunteer to tell a core member he should go to church, or pray for forgiveness, or follow a certain religious practice. In the first case, the *whole* circle – all the volunteers – should ask the core member what type of church (adult only, home church), what faith, and or what practice (confession, communion, baptism, profession of faith, evangelical) he or she would like to participate in, and then work with the core member to find a suitable spiritual support system. It may also be part of the circle’s support function to have the core member receive clearance from his or her supervisor before attending a church service. In the second instance, it is the volunteer – not the core member – who has raised the issue of church. Certainly, life is rarely that clear, and it may be that the idea of attending church or joining a congregation came up because of a circle and its core member trying to find a healthy way to occupy free time.

Family Members as Volunteers. Generally, we do not recommend volunteers be drawn from the core member’s immediate or extended family. There are two considerations: First, which we also discussed in the core member section, is that when we look at which potential core member most needs a circle, we are looking for those who have very little or no support in the community. If there are family members who are willing to participate in a circle, the question to be asked is, aren’t they already this potential core member’s “circle” of support? The second point is that a family member on a circle, like it or not, is immediately in a conflict of interest. The core member brings with him a unique set of challenges other returning persons do

not usually encounter. Society is – at a minimum – angry, afraid, distrustful, and suspicious of people who have committed sexual offenses. Offering support to this group of so-called pariahs is, for some, equally suspicious, and those offering support are often treated with an equal dose of it, too. Being responsible for and to oneself and others, in other words, being accountable, is an essential part of a returning person's ingredients for success.

The “A” in CoSA means we understand the need to toe the line *vis a vis* accountability, and we commit to holding the returning core member to a high standard. Behavior that violates court-imposed rules and/or legislated conditions may require calling on the authorities at the risk of the core member returning to prison. This is a core mandate for CoSA and its volunteers. This begs a few questions: Can a family member be counted on to do the same? Should they be? In most cases, the answer is probably “Yes,” for many reasons, not the least of which is not wanting to watch a family member damage yet another person and, in the process, destroy more of their own life more than they already have. But, perhaps not in every case would a family member want to or be able to meet the ultimate test of accountability in CoSA. Therefore, credibility is the question. Your community, and especially those in law-enforcement and in corrections with whom you collaborate need to believe that when the time comes – if it comes – for critical information to be shared, your CoSA will not hesitate to do so. More to the point, it is about trust – trust already ruined when the core member committed the offense, and the hoped-for restoration of a level of trust sufficient that the core member and the community can come to co-exist in peace at the very least. For these reasons, we do not recommend that family members be included as volunteers in a CoSA. This does not mean that they should necessarily be left out entirely; circles can occasionally invite guests to sit through a meeting or part of one, or participate in a recreational or leisure activity.

Elements of a Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

A volunteer recruitment workplan is contained in *Appendix D* for your reference. Once a cadre of potential volunteers has been identified, and that could include people who express interest but are not committed, or even those who want to know more but aren't sure they'll want to commit, then we recommend organizers hold an orientation session. Such sessions can usually be offered over a two- or three-hour period in an evening. This is a volunteer orientation. There is another orientation session geared toward CoSA partners, such as sheriffs and/or police,

department of corrections officials, community supervisors, and so forth. That orientation – a professionals orientation – is somewhat different in focus than a volunteer orientation. You may find that you want to run several volunteer orientations before a group is ready to proceed to Phase I of the training program.

Volunteer Application Forms

Please note that a formal volunteer application form is *not* usually requested until potential applicants have attended the orientation and basic training. Once these training modules have been completed and both the project manager or coordinator and the potential volunteer have decided to proceed with further training, the individual is then asked to complete an application form. A sample volunteer application form is contained in *Appendix E*, for your reference.

Resumes and References

Potential volunteers may be asked to supply a written resume (or work record if they do not have a resume) with their volunteer application form, keeping in mind that some of those who want to volunteer may not have a work history. Some CoSA organizations feel having a personal resume helps them to structure a good application interview by directing them to pertinent areas of an applicant's history. Some volunteers may have never worked outside the home. Rather than a written resume, the interview can focus on child care and parenting experiences, running a household, caring for aging parents and relatives, or other volunteer experiences as a way of gauging a person's suitability and preparedness to volunteer in a Circle. Some of those "at home" and volunteer experiences are often very valuable to have in a circle.

Three personal references are ideal. Two references should come from community members (not relatives) who can vouch for the potential volunteer's status in the community. Where possible, a third can come from a professional source (e.g., priest, pastor, medical doctor, professor, or instructor) who is likely to belong to a professional regulatory body and is bound by a professional code of ethics. References must always be checked. Each reference check is capable of generating other references, and the project manager or coordinator should not be hesitant about making further inquiries as the need arises.

The purpose of using resume, references and interviews is to assist the project manager in gaining a better understanding of a potential volunteer's life history, including the strengths the person brings to this type of work, and his or her areas of vulnerability.

Volunteer Training

The previous section helps to explain how to go about finding volunteers, and how to screen them for placement within your CoSA organization. But that's not all: volunteers require careful preparation, and while doing so you have an even greater opportunity to see your potential volunteers interact with others. As much as this is part of "training" volunteers, it is also a great opportunity to continue the screening process. When we speak of "volunteer training," we are really talking about volunteer "preparation." Some have noted that the word "training" might be interpreted as providing some level of expertise or professionalism for our volunteers. We think that is a point worth considering. Still, over the years we have come to recognize the word "training" as the act of both recruiting, screening, and preparing suitable volunteers to be in a Circle of Support and Accountability.

The process of training comes in three general parts: orientation, basic training, and advanced training. Orientation often occurs over the space of a single afternoon or evening. There are two types of orientation: one, usually conducted in the afternoon during a work week, is for professionals. Professionals include parole and probation officers, law-enforcement officers (police, sheriffs, FBI and Special Agents), departments of correction, sex violence treatment specialists, mental health professionals, addictions specialists, victim advocates, and others. These professional orientations are often closed to members of the public in order to allow a free-flow exchange of information and discussion that might be inappropriate for a public forum. Some, however, are open, and when they are, we see them as opportunities for members of the public to see who is involved in maintaining their safety. The goal of the orientation for professionals is to outline what a CoSA is; how it usually operates; what is involved in terms of organizational structure; the process of volunteer recruitment, screening, and training; and what the updated track record is in terms of effectiveness and research outcomes. We always include a comprehensive period during the orientation to talk about the realities of sexual offending. We have found that even those in the professional ranks hold inaccurate myths and anecdotal data. Among professionals dedicated to reducing sexual violence

in our communities, we believe that the task begins with putting good, solid, up-to-date information about sexual offending in the hands of everyone – professionals and ordinary citizens alike. Sometimes our professional orientations will take the form of day-long seminars, during which the discussion and debate can be spirited and vigorous. We have yet to receive negative feedback. All our professional orientations have been very positively received.

The volunteer orientation is not a lot different than the professional orientation, although we may go lighter on statistics, research, and outcome data. We recommend opening the doors wide for the volunteer orientation so that anyone with even a passing interest in CoSA can attend and learn more about it. Not everyone who attends will necessarily follow-through and become a volunteer, but keep in mind that as much as CoSA is a means to provide evidence-based assistance to a person release to the community, there is also a very valuable public education piece that we cannot and should not ignore. We feel confident that anyone who attends a CoSA orientation session walks away more knowledgeable about sexual violence prevention than when they walked in.

Of course, professionals are also welcomed to attend volunteer orientations if they wish. Some do, so they can get a look at the volunteers with whom they might be interacting and, perhaps as important, *vice versa*. As noted, the volunteer orientation can also act as a community service, providing public education about the various aspects of sexual offending and how a community might respond. During these encounters, both potential volunteers and local project managers can decide if they might wish to work together at a future time. Sometimes, during the public education sessions, some potential volunteers recognize that CoSA is not a good match for them, and they screen themselves out. We use the same slides as in the Professional PowerPoint, but with a different emphasis. Portions of the training process can provide an opportunity for initial recruitment. Included in this package is a video and PowerPoint presentation that provides an introduction to Circles of Support and Accountability. This video would be appropriate for both professional and volunteer orientation sessions.

Topics of Training

The list outlined in Figure 2 suggests the essential topics of a basic training or preparation for volunteers. As well, new staff and others associated with your CoSA project should receive this basic training. We have found this curriculum to be very good at “tuning” new volunteers

and staff or advisory personnel to the essentials of sexual offending in the community, as well as for establishing the basis for community engagement of volunteers. We use the word “tuning” on purpose. It is not essential that volunteers memorize the information and detail contained in this training curriculum. They do, however, need to be familiar with it – becoming “attuned” to the information contained herein. We suggest project managers or CoSA Coordinators *not* attempt to deliver this entire curriculum on their own. In fact, we strongly recommend you not even try to do this, even if you have exemplary expertise in every single area we have listed below. We have several reasons for this caution. First, this is where your efforts in community engagement, and your skill in recruiting community-based professionals begins to generate rewards; we suggest you invite suitable professionals, such as probation and parole supervisors (i.e., senior members of the staff), treatment providers, and other experts from your local community to deliver the segments we have marked with an asterisk.

We further suggest – indeed, highly recommend – that you look for those who are members of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA). Membership in ATSA adds an extra level of assurance that your trainer is up-to-date on the most recent information, research, and treatment approaches available. You might also consider joining ATSA, or at least visit its website at www.ATSA.com. And, while we’re at it, another good website to visit for information is the Sex Offender Management, Assessment, and Planning Initiative (SOMAPI – Office of Justice Programs, 2015) found at <https://smart.gov> and follow the link to SOMAPI (while you’re there, make sure you check out the other information available at this site). If you are worried that these are government or government-friendly sites biased against the re-entry of persons who have sexually offended and initiatives like CoSA, relax. As it happens, what you are reading now is provided to you by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and the SMART Office. Further, the ATSA folks are very much in support of initiatives like CoSA, *when they are appropriately implemented* which, we hope, is why you are reading this material. Your task, you may recall, is not just to get a group of volunteers around a person known to be at risk for future sexual violence, and then call yourself a CoSA. CoSA is a process of community engagement at all levels to help increase a community’s capacity as a whole to respond in a restorative way to the presence of high-risk persons who have sexually offended.

Figure 2: Suggested CoSA Volunteer Training Topics

- * Overview of the criminal justice system in your jurisdiction – State or Federal
 - * Probation and parole conditions and other court orders
 - Restorative justice
 - * Needs of survivors
 - * Effects of institutionalization
 - * Human sexuality and sexual deviance (see Appendix H and Video)
 - * Risk assessment (see Appendix H and Video)
 - * Core member needs assessment
 - * Working with persons with special needs (see Appendix H and Video)
 - The CoSA model and its functions and processes (see Appendix H and Video)
 - Boundaries and borders
 - Conflict resolution
 - * Group dynamics and building group cohesion
 - * Substance abuse and impulse control (see Appendix H and Video)
 - * Crisis response and preparing for critical incident stress
 - * Self-Care and Burnout (see Appendix H and Video)
 - * Working with correctional officials, police, news media and other community professionals
 - Building a covenant (see Appendix H and Video)
 - Closing a circle
 - Other topics as necessary
- * Asterisked topics are those that we strongly recommend you approach relevant professionals in your community to come and address with your volunteers.*

The second reason you should not attempt to accomplish all of this training on your own is that by including your local professionals, you include them in building your CoSA, offering them opportunities for critical buy-ins to your project, including a level of ownership for the

CoSA project's success. Inclusion also provides a way for them to meet and interact with your volunteers. They may also offer you some critical feedback on who you are thinking of including in your volunteer pool. Including your local professionals allows your volunteers to meet first-hand those individuals in your community responsible for their public safety. Volunteers ordinarily do not have the opportunity of meeting with probation and parole officers, sexual violence treatment specialists, law enforcement specialists, and correctional officers, and they often have a great deal of curiosity, perhaps even fear – both of which may be allayed to a degree by getting answers from experts.

Training never ends, really, and while volunteers and staff in CoSA are carefully screened and trained, supervising their interactions with core members, as well as with other volunteers or staff members, is important. During training, attention is paid to expressions of attitudes and values that may fit into antisocial or procriminal attitudes, values, and beliefs. For instance, in conducting training sessions, we are careful to listen for statements from participants (staff or volunteers) that betray hostility toward women in the guise of jokes, or other statements indicative of problematic thinking or motives. We are also careful to listen for perspectives that betray a cynical, suspicious, or oppositional attitude toward the law, law enforcement, or corrections. Such attitudes can foster procriminal attitudes that are the antecedents of criminal thought, rumination and, ultimately, criminal behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 314).

Training topics can usually be addressed as individual topics on their own, or in pairs of topics during evening training sessions with your volunteers. We recommend that you establish one evening a week that is suitable for everyone, and run your training sessions for two hours on that evening, once each week or every other week. This helps establish a routine you may then choose to follow when your core member arrives. For instance, if you choose Tuesdays between 7:00 PM and 9:00 PM as Circle Training evenings and, for the next three months, meet every Tuesday. That way, you may then decide that Tuesdays will become “Circle Night” when your volunteers and your core member meet. Meeting weekly will get you through the training itinerary, establish the routine of weekly meetings with your core member when he arrives, and will help your group to establish rapport amongst themselves. The goal for your core member is to integrate with the community. The first “community” he meets will be your volunteers and, as such, his task of re-entry and integration becomes much smaller and manageable. He just needs – for now – to become comfortable and trusting of the three to five volunteers in his circle. After

that, his circle will help him with the larger task of meeting others and gradually fitting in with the larger community.

Alternatively, some organizations have opted to cover topics over the course of two or more Saturday, day-long “seminars.” They may cover some during the week, but feel the need to get as many volunteers up-to-speed as quickly as possible. This is acceptable, but it takes away from the team-building and routinizing approach regular weekday evenings can provide.

Volunteer training is very important for many of the reasons cited above (continuation of the screening process, community engagement of professionals, sensitizing volunteers to relevant topics, building rapport, building routine, and building “intentional” community). Once your formal training has concluded, there is more work to be done. It is a good practice for site coordinators to routinely visit the circles under their care and to observe the dynamics therein. It is also a good practice to match experienced volunteers (when you’ve been around long enough to have them) in a circle with inexperienced volunteers. The mentoring and informal “training” that arises is invaluable.

Some organizers have found training to be too much of a bother, and some have said they cannot in good faith ask their volunteers to give up that much of their time and still commit to a year of service to their core member afterwards. While these are valid concerns, balance is the key to mounting a good volunteer preparation itinerary. Remember that you are preparing your volunteers to work with high-risk/high-need individuals. While some organizations have forgone training as we describe it, we consider such a decision to be significantly reckless and dismissive of the very real risks inherent in “doing CoSA” in a haphazard fashion. Providing good training is also part of obtaining an informed consent, which will likely only come into play if something goes horribly wrong and the question is asked, “As a volunteer, were you provided with all of the information you felt you needed to undertake the tasks asked of you?” The following is cited in a Canadian Evaluation completed in 2015 (Chouinard & Riddick, 2015):

Overall, training was considered excellent by the vast majority of circle volunteers. While 95% of circle volunteers surveyed were “very satisfied” to “satisfied” with the training they received prior to entering a circle, 26% nonetheless indicated that they do not have adequate experience to deal with core member issues, with 24% indicating inadequate training to help them deal with core member issues. Volunteers indicated that they would

like more training on how to deal with manipulative core members, what they can realistically expect from core members, more background on the lives of inmates as a better way of understanding the challenges core members face when they are released, and inquiry techniques on how to hold core members accountable while still creating a positive environment.

COVENANTING

We know that accountability is an important feature in CoSA. Occasionally, we see a scenario in which volunteers and staff believe their role is, besides supporting a core member, to “hold him” or “make him” accountable. As in all things within a healthy CoSA, the behavior we want to see our core members exhibit is behavior we must also model. We, too, must not just be accountable, but demonstrate through our own behavior what accountable behavior looks like and what real “accountability” is.

We have said elsewhere that the relationships within a CoSA are “covenanted relationships.” What does that mean? The structure of a CoSA provides within it a vehicle of accountability called a “covenant.” A covenant is the “glue” holding a circle together; it sets the stage for relationships within the circle, beginning with the first circle meeting; it describes what is expected of everyone in the circle including the core member, volunteers, and staff members; it describes how decisions are made and, most importantly, how conflicts are to be resolved and what will happen if the core member violates the law, including any court-ordered conditions. The covenant ensures that everyone is going into the circle with their eyes wide-open and with a mutual understanding of how the circle is intended to function. It also spells out what recourse every person has if the circle is not functioning in those ways. Through the covenant, each circle member is accountable to the next, including the core member. This ensures that accountability is a mutual expectation on the part of every circle member. It is like a multi-lane, two-way roadway, and not just a single lane, one-way street running from the core member to the circle membership. The covenant, in a way, is like the circle’s “charter” or its founding document – something almost every community has as its basis.

But, what is a covenant? Certainly, there are the covenants described in religious texts such as the Bible – the covenant between God and His People. There are also covenants enshrined in laws. Definitions of a covenant include something that is a contract, a treaty, an accord, a promise, a bond, an arrangement, an understanding, and more.⁴ For instance, a landlord “covenants” to repair property damaged by improper maintenance of the dwelling’s structure.

⁴ The Hebrew word, *berith*, is translated into English as “covenant,” and occurs over 280 times in the Old Testament. (The English word covenant means “a coming together.”)

Or, trees on a piece of private property being donated to the county for public use are protected by a covenant between the county and the donor.

In the case of CoSA, covenants are not legal documents and are not enforceable under any law, but represent the understanding (the “covenant”) between the circle membership and the core member. In a sense, it is an agreement and understanding of mutual responsibility: We will do this if you will do that, and we will do that if you will do this. A primary part of a CoSA covenant, for instance, is that all participants, including the core member, will remain committed to the idea that there be no further victims in *this* core member’s life. Another component might be the promise (the “covenant”) to attend all meetings on time every week. In those instances in which a core member is also held to account by a probation or parole order or some other judicial decree, it is helpful to weave the terms of those conditions into the CoSA covenant.

The covenant should not be imposed on a core member, who should be afforded an equal opportunity to contribute to what goes into the covenant. We understand there may be logistical constraints challenging the core member’s pre-release contribution; we address how to negotiate those in the next paragraph. Covenants can also be changed with the unanimous agreement of everyone in the core member’s circle if new or evolving circumstances require changes. It should also be carefully explained to all involved that being in a circle means agreeing to a covenant from the first meeting forward. If anyone does not want to be in a covenanted relationship, they cannot be part of a circle – in essence, they “opt out” and cannot sit on the circle. Further, there are several essential points that should be part of any CoSA covenant, no matter the jurisdiction in which they operate and that should not be subject to any member’s insistence that they be removed. We will discuss those in a moment, after we discuss a problem we seem to have created for ourselves.

We said the covenant should be in place from the very first meeting forward, and we have said the core member and every other circle member should participate in the writing of the covenant. This ideal process presumes that a circle is being formed well in advance of a core member’s release, that there has been an opportunity for the circle volunteers to be with the core member to meet him and *vice versa*, and that everyone has had the opportunity to discuss how the circle will operate starting on the day of release. Under those circumstances a covenant can be ready for the first circle meeting in the community. In all cases, if this “ideal” can be

achieved, we recommend it, but we are aware that in many instances there is no pre-release opportunity to meet, and the first time volunteers meet their core member is potentially only when he arrives in the community. Other CoSA organizations tell us they like to take their time writing a covenant to make sure everything that needs to be in the covenant gets there, and the core member has an opportunity to fully participate. They tell us that it might take weeks, even months, to arrive at a final covenant. We tend to think that these organizations are over-thinking the covenanting process and, in some cases, might be experiencing manipulation by their core member. Most CoSA organizations have developed policy standards around the covenanting process such that certain, non-negotiable items will be part of whatever final covenant evolves but, more to the point, these standard components may also act as a preliminary covenant a circle can use for its first meeting. Some of these standard items include wording around the following:

- A commitment to support the core member as he works to achieve his goal of no more victims
- A commitment to confidentiality within the circle (and a distinction between confidentiality and secrets)
- A commitment to exceptions to confidentiality, such as:
 - If there is a risk of harm to another person
 - If there is a risk of a circle member harming himself
 - If there is a breach and/or violation of a probation or court-ordered condition
 - If a law has or is about to be broken
 - If there is a child or other vulnerable person (e.g., disabled persons) at risk
 - If there is reason to believe that the core member may be re-involving himself in a “crime-cycle” or other behavior as a precursor to re-offending
- A statement detailing what the process will be if the circle – or a single circle volunteer, including the core member – determines confidentiality needs to be broken, such as:
 - The circle will immediately discuss the situation with their coordinator (or other senior staff member if the coordinator is unavailable), who will determine a course of action, including raising the matter with the legally mandated supervisory agent (e.g.,

probation officer, parole officer, correctional officer), or law-enforcement if warranted, and whether it is still safe for the circle to continue meeting⁵

- Circle weekly meeting days, times, and duration to be set by the circle at the first meeting, and an expectation everyone will attend on time or a process for excusing oneself from a meeting (e.g., notice, number of absences allowed, etc.)
- A commitment to tell the truth, to be transparent, and to work toward building increasing levels of trust between circle members and the core member
- A commitment to support the core member in all his legitimate attempts to integrate with the community
- A commitment on the part of the core member to discuss openly with his circle volunteers the circumstances of his sexual offending and other offending within a reasonable period of time (e.g., by the end of the first month, or before)
- Other essential “bottom line” commitments as deemed necessary by the organization

There may be other items the CoSA organization deems fundamental to operating a safe, transparent and accountable support circle; our only caution is not to overthink the covenant or treat it too lightly. A sample CoSA Covenant is found in *Appendix F* and a video and PowerPoint presentation are available on this topic. Ultimately, the covenant does not need to be an iron-clad, bullet-proof document vetted by legal counsel. In fact, it should studiously avoid legal language and be simple enough to be easily understood by anyone. If your core member cannot read, write the covenant anyway, and read it to him, or even record it in a media format that he can easily access and listen to himself, or together with his circle.

Use our basic covenant to open your circle, then have everyone in the circle contribute to composing a more comprehensive and personalized covenant in the weeks ahead, while remaining committed to the basic covenant you have.

Other items you might want to include in a more detailed covenant might have to do with sharing or withholding of personal information like telephone numbers, home and/or work

⁵ We recommend, in this regard, that the CoSA Organization enact policy that prohibits a circle or circle volunteer from contacting a probation or parole officer directly, and that such contact be made only by the coordinator or the coordinator’s delegate (e.g., a designated staff person identified as a probation/parole liaison, and who has been appropriately introduced to the supervising agent). The idea here is to maintain an orderly liaison with probation and parole personnel who also know who their contact person is within CoSA. This allows for a systematic regulation of the balance between confidentiality and transparency with the mandated supervising agent or agency.

addresses, church attendance, information about family members, meeting the core member in the community singly or in sets of two, male and a female volunteer ratios, riding in private motor vehicles, and other pertinent issues. These are things a circle should consider in terms of who the core member is and what his offenses were. For instance, there is likely no issue with any volunteer or staff member meeting a core member alone if his offenses were against children. We would advise to do so, however, in a public place with lots of people around, and maybe not outside a McDonalds or in a shopping mall on weekends when children might reasonably be present. If he's supervised, there are likely probation conditions prohibiting him being in those places anyway. It's quite another consideration if his offenses were against women, men, members of the LGBTQ communities, or seemed indiscriminate and/or violent.

In summary, the purpose of a covenant is to help ensure that the relationship will remain healthy and that it will last. The covenant itself is a series of words that are spoken to define the nature of the relationship and the principles of commitment to it. When a covenant is the foundation for relationships, the possibility of maintaining permanence and stability is greatly enhanced. We call ourselves "Circles of Support and Accountability." We could as easily describe ourselves as a "*community*" of support (affirming, available, open, honest, friendly, caring, accepting) and accountability, keeping in mind that, "Community is made from conflict as much as from cooperation; the capacity to solve conflict is what gives social relations their sinew" (Christie, 1977). When people of various backgrounds and experiences come together, there will always be conflict, even among the best-intentioned of us all. The covenant will help us negotiate those times of stretching, testing, and disruption.

CIRCLE PROCESSES

What Happens Inside a Circle?

We are often asked, “What is it that you do in Circles?” CoSA volunteers and staff are most likely to respond that they are *just friends*. Many overlook this statement and insist, “Yes, but why is CoSA so successful – what happens in a circle? What is the magic ingredient?” The truth of the matter is, we were late in coming to describe this interaction.

Part of circle formation comes just before the circle meets for the first time, and what happens at this stage can influence what comes after. We have mentioned that in order for CoSA volunteers to make an informed choice about whether they want to volunteer with a core member, they need to know something about him. Most importantly, volunteers need to know something about his criminal history and his most recent conviction. Some volunteers will tell you, “I just want to meet him as a person first, and then we can get into whatever he did.” Noble sentiment as that may be, what happens to the circle, the core member, and the volunteer if the volunteer becomes so put-off by what their core member eventually discloses that they can’t go on? As well, addressing sexual violence is intrinsically linked to the rules of consent. These issues are sometimes complex and nuanced, and make a good topic for training. For now, “informed consent” means that a person has the information they need to make a truly informed decision about what happens in their life next and that their decision is one that is free of manipulation or inducement. Some volunteers just need the time to absorb who the person is – or at one time was – and to talk with their fellow volunteers about the effect the information they have received is having on them. They may also want to talk to their spouse or partner about the person with whom they are thinking of becoming involved as a volunteer. Certainly, we have had volunteers who thought there was not much hope for successful reintegration for some of their core members before they met him, and as one volunteer commented:

...on our drive to the prison to be introduced to him, I remember thinking, “The best-case scenario I can see coming out of this is that he gets out of jail, we watch him like a hawk, and as soon as we see him going sideways we turn him back in to the police, he’d be back behind bars again, and the community would be safe - we’ve done our duty.”

Having a chance to explore those feelings before being “on the drive to prison” to meet the core member would likely have generated some good discussion among fellow volunteers, which may have been very helpful. As it often happens, even with some misgivings after hearing about a core

member's history, most volunteers come to see their core member as a fellow human needing support. We often hear volunteers say that their CoSA volunteer work changed their lives in ways they did not anticipate. These are usually positive changes and, sometimes, the first change is a change of attitude toward people who sexually offend – ostensibly, learning to see past the labels.

In the first few weeks of circle meetings, there are often many things your core member needs. Think of Maslow's (1943) "hierarchy of needs;" beginning with the basic ones – food, water, clothing, warmth, rest, and basic safety and security. Translate these into your core member needing better clothes and shoes, maybe even a change of socks and underwear. What about food and where is the next meal coming from? Are there charities with food baskets, soup lines? What about a place to live, to rent, and with whom else might they be sharing living quarters and is that safe? Then, there may be transportation needs, such as getting to the probation office, checking in with police, meeting sex offender registry requirements, and so forth. And all of these issues need to be addressed over at least the short-term, and longer as time passes, before the goals of CoSA can begin to emerge. Having companions, building trust, thinking about friendship, inter-dependence, intimacy and what that means may have to wait while those basic necessities are shored-up. These "higher-order" emotional and psychological needs are important to all people, but they cannot be met until basic needs are being consistently and reliably met. As such, your first few weeks will likely be absorbed helping your core member fulfill those basic needs in a whirlwind of events and mini-crises. At the same time, you will also want to keep an eye on your own safety, time commitment, the needs of your own family, and be aware of where your boundaries are.

Setting appropriate boundaries is something we discussed in the section about covenants. Part of what happens in a circle is clarifying with your core member what the boundaries are or should be. Be aware that he may have some of his own, which is okay. Additionally, there are boundaries around how much time you can devote to CoSA, to your core member, what the expectations are around what you – or any other member of the circle – can do in terms of support for your core member. For instance, you know that most core members will have violated personal boundaries; so, when your core member announces that a daily hug from all of you is important so he can feel good about himself and feel accepted, this needs to be identified as inappropriate, at least in the early days. You may need to reinforce some boundaries more often than you think is necessary. However, that might be part of what happens inside your CoSA – setting and reinforcing personal boundaries. For others, it may be the core member

cannot tolerate any physical contact, or may interpret physical contact as somebody “coming on” to him. Reassurance, persistence, and modelling of appropriate behavior, even how to and how not to give and receive or interpret hugs may be what consumes some circle time. As some volunteers will say, supporting your core member while he takes his initial steps toward integrating with the CoSA community, and then gradually with the larger community beyond CoSA, is not “easy integration.”

Being in a circle requires building trust and working together to build a relationship with your core member. As in any relationship, there will be times of discomfort around competing values, personalities and, sometimes with core members, troubled and troublesome thinking. These are often not things that change easily or quickly. The basis for change, however, has to be trust and the establishment of a safe and healthy connection against a backdrop of social isolation and loneliness. As one core member reminded his circle, “I am a pariah and they won’t ever let me forget what I did.” His reference to “they” meant probation, parole, sex offender registry bureaucrats, and police. You may come to share his frustration and feel annoyed by a legal system that seems to militate against “integration,” by insisting on the otherness of your core member. In spite of these realities, you must again model a way for him to carry on living while accepting these new elements in his life. To reiterate, this is not easy integration, and you will want to constantly weigh the balance between your core member’s neediness and the circle’s response to guard against creating dependence. As one CoSA volunteer wrote:

As a CoSA volunteer I have become a friend, mentor, accountability partner, buffer, resource person, and role model . . . My three-year journey has led me to many extremes, from the desperation of trying to find a place for Arthur to sleep the first night, to the triumph of helping him move into his own apartment two years later; from seeing his isolation and aloneness, to witnessing him being invited to five turkey dinners at Christmas; from fearing any kind of physical contact from Arthur, to hearing him explain to his aunt how the hugs from his circle members are very meaningful, but he has learned that they are from his sisters, and not his sweethearts; from the realization of the enormity of my commitment, to the realization of the enormity of the value to my community. I am energized by the mission of CoSA to help offenders reintegrate and help in leading them to a place of "offenders no more," by helping them find what they really need - community, where we say, “We accept

and adopt you with all the difficulties that you bring to us - because what are the alternatives?”

There is a tendency to discount the most significant and fundamental change agent present in the “work” of CoSA: a high-quality relationship and the development of close prosocial bonds is the setting, the backdrop, and the context for effective modeling and reinforcement of anti-criminal behavior and effective disapproval of pro-criminal behavior, attitudes, values, and beliefs. From research, we know the factors that identify “high quality relationships,” including modeling, reinforcement, problem-solving, structured learning (e.g., attendance at well-run Circle meetings), and caring (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 309). A “friend” in the form of a CoSA volunteer is a source of supportive encouragement and positive outlook (reinforcement). As a friend, the CoSA volunteer emphasizes and encourages the core member’s strengths – by celebrating even small achievements, milestones, and anniversaries. Achievements may be “rewarded” concretely with a dinner, a shared leisure activity, or party (e.g., on birthdays – Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 315). Volunteers strive to be sources of reward and positive regard, more so than agents of disapproval; although the call to responsibility and accountability is constant and unhesitating. Reinforcement is also constant, strong, and articulate (e.g., “We are so proud you have managed to cope with the past week without losing your temper”; “You did the right thing in saying you could not babysit, and that took courage”; “Wow! You have your own place to call home!”; “Come to our Thanksgiving dinner. You really are a changed person!”). Yet, when disapproval is necessary, it is done within a context of one friend to another, and is equally as firmly and strongly stated (e.g., “Talking about women’s breasts in that way is insensitive and thinking that way is part of who you were when you went to jail. We expect better of you.”).

Good volunteers and staff are those who are “firm but fair” (Andrews & Keisling, 1980, p. 462-463) or, “interpersonally warm, tolerant and flexible, yet sensitive to conventional rules and procedures” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 305). Warm, supportive family and friendly support, which one particular CoSA volunteer and her other circle volunteers provided to their core member on a daily basis, is validated by research to increase rehabilitative success in the community (Wilson et al., 2007a-c; Wilson et al., 2009). To summarize, volunteers and staff involved most effectively with core members in CoSA are those who work to:

1. Establish high quality relationships (e.g., a relationship based on increasing trust and

transparency, mutuality, reciprocity, respect and trust)

2. Demonstrate anti-criminal expressions (modeling)
3. Approve of the core member's anti-criminal expressions (reinforcement)
4. Disapprove of the client's pro-criminal expressions (punishment – the disapproval itself is punishment in a psychological and emotional context) – Andrews & Bonta, (2003, pp. 314-315).

As one volunteer observed, CoSA is not a treatment and is not considered to be a “program,” *per se*. It is even hard to refer to CoSA as a “process,” unless you see that building relationships and friendships is a process, too. It is, however, most certainly a process that most human beings engage in on a daily basis. Showing a core member how that's done is accomplished through modeling.

As noted elsewhere, circles will typically meet on a weekly basis at first; perhaps, more often as necessary. You can expect that the initial meetings will be full of questions and concerns on the part of the core member as he attempts to get a handle on his new reality in the community. Ultimately, these immediate or urgent matters will give way to a more social and reciprocal process in which all members of the circle – core member and volunteers alike – are able to contribute to a joint discussion. It is also important that individual meetings between volunteers and the core member also occur, keeping boundary issues safety concerns in mind. These meetings may include going out for lunch or coffee, an excursion with a specific task (e.g., get a replacement copy of the core member's Social Security card), or other mutually agreed upon activities. It is likely also important for the circle to establish protocols around telephone contacts after hours or in the event of emergencies. While we do not expect all volunteers to be available 24/7, it may be that certain core members will initially require some degree of on-call coverage.

As the circle sets into a routine, full group meetings may occur less frequently, with individual meetings perhaps taking precedence. Whether or not to reduce the frequency of meetings should be a circle discussion and decision, likely with input from the CoSA Coordinator. Caution should be exercised in not allowing the core member to rush the process. As much as we may appreciate his pride in accomplishment, taking off the training wheels too

quickly leaves him at risk for falling back into old ways. Remember that all new skill acquisition processes require a period of internship or supervised practice. As mental health practitioners, we were both required to engage in such practices after graduation from university. Learning something is not necessarily the same thing as being able to routinely put that learning into practice.

Ending a Circle

How will you know when it's time for the circle to close or, perhaps, become less of a formal endeavor and more of a natural friendship? As with other decisions in CoSA, we encourage coordinators and volunteers to take such decisions with care. We all want the core member to be successful and we are certainly encouraged by his successes but, as noted above, making major changes to the circle structure or practices should be entertained only with strong evidence that this is the proper time to be doing so.

When CoSA first emerged in Canada, we initially thought that most core members would be in a circle for a year or two and that they would then be prepared to assume independent life in the community. Boy, were we wrong. Indeed, many of the men we accepted into circles were so fundamentally broken – psychologically and emotionally – that a quick fix via a couple years' involvement in CoSA was unlikely to occur. As such, some CoSA projects have seen involvement in circles extending years. Other projects have set firm limits on how long a core member can be in a circle, but it has been our observation that such stringent restrictions lead to negative outcomes. What appears to be a more reasonable approach is to allow the circle to “morph” into something less formal and structured – much like the friendly relationships others enjoy in the community. As Charlie Taylor once said when questioned about his CoSA volunteers, “Those aren't my volunteers, those are my friends.”

Sometimes a circle ends in a less organized fashion; perhaps, as a result of the core member becoming reinvolved in crime and returning to custody. In these instances, some circles have chosen to remain involved with the core member, in spite of his incarcerated status. Depending on how long he is likely to be in custody, it may be that the circle can remain intact and reinitiate upon release. In other circumstances, such as long-term reincarceration, it is likely

advisable to dissolve the formal circle and allow volunteers to choose whether or not to maintain contact with the core member while incarcerated.

In other scenarios, we have seen core members decide that they no longer wish to be involved in their circle; at times against the advice of their volunteers or CoSA Coordinator. Of course, this is within the core member's purview as a volunteer participant; although it would be important to attempt to discuss with him what the possible outcomes might be of his decision to leave the circle. Additionally, there may be a need to inform other involved parties (e.g., police, probation and parole, etc.) that the core member has left the circle.

SELF-CARE & BURNOUT⁶

Although burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma are related (in that they are all, in one form or another, stress reactions) there are important differences between them. We all need to time away to re-charge ourselves and regenerate.

For many years correctional workers and treatment providers refused to acknowledge the trauma experiences of offenders, and still have difficulty acknowledging the trauma some people who have offended experience from the commission of their own crimes. Yet these experiences are genuine for many individuals involved in the criminal justice system. CoSA staff and volunteers are expected to hold in balance the needs of their core members with the needs of their victims. Often, CoSA staff and volunteers encounter not just the horrific crimes of their core members, but the horrible traumas many of these men experienced themselves, often as children. When witnessing a person's life as multi-dimensional in these ways, it is to be expected that some staff and volunteers will experience sometimes profound shifts in their world views. They may experience that once firm and grounding beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged following repeated exposure to core member's lives and the trauma some men have experienced.

A CoSA-involved person once came to us and reported that her intimacy in her marriage had been deteriorating for the past year. She did not want to be sexual, and she and her husband were arguing more. When we inquired about her CoSA duties, we learned that this person was responsible for reading core members' correctional files in order to brief circle volunteers on their core member's offense history. Several new core members had violated children, and the level of detail that had been made available to her was inappropriate. Some of the detail was grisly, and this person found she could not stop reading those details – descriptions of physical harm endured during a rape; blood in a child's underwear; type of restraints used. This CoSA person had clearly “seen too much,” on those files and understandably, even predictably, experienced classic vicarious trauma. Her CoSA had an arrangement with a correctional psychologist who helped this woman recover. The CoSA addressed their “need-to-know” policies, and disclosure requirements, whereby access to correctional files was rescinded, and correctional staff familiar with core members' histories provided briefings. Where that wasn't

⁶ Portions of this section were previously published by Wilson (2017).

possible, two CoSA staff members attended to “read” whatever file information was available after being re-instructed in terms of what level of detail was needed (criminal history and number of offenses; victim types; use and level of violence; current risk appraisal, if available), and the core member’s own verbal disclosure to his circle volunteers. The often-stomach-turning details are unnecessary for CoSA to perform its support and accountability function. If you find yourself drawn to those details, it doesn’t mean you necessarily have a problem, but you should talk to someone. If you have a personal history of sexual abuse, or have a family member who is a survivor, those details may seem important to you, and you should already have had a chat with your CoSA’s leadership regarding your own, or your family member’s, victimization.

People involved in CoSA work in a field that brings them in contact with people who have engaged in sexual violence. We’re in the public safety business and as much as that may provide a measure of pride and feelings of accomplishment, being involved in sexual violence prevention also comes with some potential pitfalls. In our work with core members, we try to help them become desisters, instead of persisters. However, it is often really difficult to hear the stories of abuse that our core members tell us – either of things that were done to them, or things they did to others. So, why do we do this work? Because we want to make a difference. We care about our families, friends, and communities and through our interventions we strive to achieve our No More Victims goal. But, this potentially comes at a cost to each and every one of us involved in CoSA. We know that the work we do can be hugely exhilarating when we see the successes of our core members, but we shouldn’t kid ourselves that there aren’t darker experiences of which we need to be mindful.

There is no denying that working with persons with sexual behavior problems and antisocial orientations is challenging (see Edmunds, 1997; Ellerby, 1998; Ennis & Horne, 2003). Some of our core members are really good at “pushing our buttons.” How do circle volunteers offset their natural tendencies to be empathic and helpful with their natural tendencies to be angry and upset at what the core members have done (or continue to do)? We all understand that there may be consequences to the strong emotional responses we are likely to experience in CoSA, but we also understand that we’re volunteering because of a belief that it is unconscionable to do nothing. So, volunteers and others in CoSA work to reduce the number of potential victims, knowing that our core members have the capacity – already demonstrated – to do tremendous harm. We work to ensure that core members receive appropriate support and care

according to evidence-based practices, like the Risk-Need-Responsivity framework that we've touted throughout this guide. We work to ensure that our core members are able to approximate a quality of life as close as possible to that of others without sexual behavior problems – that's the essence of the Good Lives Model (Yates et al., 2010).

Compassion Fatigue

People in the so-called “helping professions” (and this includes CoSA staff and volunteers) often self-select for things like CoSA work because they are good at caring and empathizing with others, and with another person's pain. Without being careful and attending to appropriate self-care, those who are overly compassionate can suffer from emotional and physical “erosion,” which can overtake them.

We have not been directly exposed to the trauma scene, but we hear the story told with such intensity, or we hear similar stories so often, or we have the gift and curse of extreme empathy and we suffer. We feel the feelings of our clients. We experience their fears. We dream their dreams. Eventually, we lose a certain spark of optimism, humor and hope. We tire. We aren't sick, but we aren't ourselves.

Figley (1995)

It may be that you do not observe changes in your emotional life or your behavior, but others, especially family members, do. This is typical. Some symptoms of compassion fatigue you or others may observe include:

- Feeling distracted, like many dimensions of your well-being are being affected
- Sleeping too much, or too little (nervous system arousal)
- Becoming increasingly emotional (feeling angry, feeling sad, thinking and feeling sarcastic, and seeing humor in situations that are not funny), while your problem-solving abilities seem to be decreasing
- Losing self-worth and emotional modulation
- Impairment of behavior and judgment
- Changes in intimacy needs (wanting more sex than usual, or becoming disinterested in sex; closing down, emotionally shutting off)
- Feeling isolated and disillusioned, feeling cynical, loss of morale

- Feeling depressed, potential signs of PTSD
- A change in beliefs and psychological needs of safety, trust, esteem, intimacy, and self-control
- A loss of hope and meaning (existential despair)
- Anger toward perpetrators or causal events

Vicarious Trauma

Job stress (or volunteering stress, in this instance) is the result of a complex interaction between the individual and the challenges of the “job.” Burnout involves physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that is attributable to work-related stress (Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Mayo Clinic, 2012). It is a uniquely human phenomenon that if a person holds the capacity for empathy, he or she will experience distress when hearing about terrible things that have happened to others. Circle volunteers are probably going to have experiences like that – when reading core member assessment results, police reports, or victim impact statements or, likely, during a circle meeting.

Even though volunteers weren’t there when core members committed their offenses, they are privy to intimate details of what happened. This can lead to what is known as vicarious trauma (www.headington-institute.org⁷; Pearlman & McKay, 2008). The term vicarious trauma describes (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995) what happens to workers who are with clients who have experienced trauma, a situation similar to what happens for CoSA volunteers working with core members. Because volunteers are caring people and because they express empathy and feel compassion, they may experience characteristics of victimization just by hearing about what happened to others. This emotional contagion can sometimes lead to compassion fatigue as described above – a key component in burnout. Ultimately, this is the cost of caring, but there are things we can do about it.

High Risk Professionals

The first thing we need to acknowledge is that CoSA staff and volunteers are members of a select group of persons who are at higher risk for vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. These workers include, but are not restricted to:

⁷ Laurie Anne Pearlman is a powerhouse in the burnout and vicarious trauma research and practice world. This online resource – and the others that go with it – is particularly helpful. Visit www.headington-institute.org.

- Counselors, Psychologists, Social Workers
- Health/Hospital Staff
- Emergency Workers
- Child Protection Workers
- Corrections Staff
- Law Enforcement Officials
- Court Officials
- Volunteers

The effects of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue can be particularly pertinent to people who interview and counsel trauma victims, those who work with victims and their families and, notably for us, people who work with clients who have abused others.

Predictors and Mediators of Secondary Traumatic Stress Effects

It's important to recognize that not everyone will be affected by troubling information or traumatic stress in the same way. Some people are really resilient and it doesn't seem to matter much what they see or hear – they get past it. Others, however, may find certain situations or scenarios much more difficult to manage. The research on self-care and burnout tells us that there are individual factors to consider, as well as situational and environmental factors at play. This shouldn't surprise us, as this is pretty much the case with virtually everything in social services – it's a mix of internal and external variables.

Individual Factors

A good bit of how we respond to traumatic stress has to do with our personal history; that is, our personal experiences of trauma, loss, and victimization and how we've managed to cope (or not) with situations throughout our lives. Our personality style (and ego defenses) will influence our coping style and the mechanisms we use to deal with difficult situations – either at work or in other environments (e.g., have you ever found yourself bringing work crap home with you?).

Another important consideration is current life context. What's happening for you outside of the work environment? Is your teenage daughter or son having difficulties, are you having problems in important relationships, has someone in your family or friend circle just experienced

a situation of abuse? All of these private life situations can affect our ability to cope with difficult situations at work.

Here are some individual risk factors to consider (see Pearlman & Caringi, 2009; Pearlman & McKay, 2008):

- Lifestyle balance
- Sense of control
- Perceptions of organizational intentions/commitment
- Perceptions of fairness
- Fit between values of self and organization
- Coping skills and strategies

What can we do to protect ourselves? Some obvious recommendations are to take opportunities to increase our training base and to take the time to debrief situations we experience in CoSA with our fellow volunteers, CoSA Coordinator, and other trusted confidantes. And, keep in mind that we may need to practice what we preach: If you have problems you can't manage, maybe think about seeking professional help.

Situational Factors

As much as there are factors we bring to the table in terms of our own personal makeup and experience bases, there are factors over which we have a lot less control. Here are some “workplace” risk factors to consider (see Pearlman & Caringi, 2009; Pearlman & McKay, 2008):

- Role ambiguity
- Role conflict
- Availability of tangible and intrinsic rewards
- Workload
- Recognition that work is valuable
- Social support

As a word, “supervision” connotes a certain cringe-worthy experience, probably in some sense related to getting that annual performance review from your boss. None of us like being informed of our faults, nor do we like being told what to do. As such, it's something of an unfortunate choice of word and many of us may have experienced supervision as a chore.

However, when we say supervision here, we actually mean something wonderful – the opportunity to sit down with someone who cares about you and the work you do enough to listen, consider *all* the information provided, and give helpful and meaningful advice – or, if it’s all that’s required, just listen and validate your experience. Supervision is the opportunity to share what you’re proud of, as well as what causes you to quietly freak out. Regularly sharing your CoSA experiences with concerned peers or CoSA coordinators – either individually or as a group – can have profound effects on quality of life, both professionally and personally. And, we don’t do it often enough.

Mitigation Factors

Maintaining a balanced, self-determined lifestyle is central to effective self-care. How well are you taking care of yourself? Of course, self-care needs to be practiced in the CoSA environment as much as in your personal life. We’ve seen the effects of the holistic revolution in treatment and risk management approaches employed with our core members, but why shouldn’t we also apply these ideas to aspects of our lives? The more balanced we are across the full range of personal care, the more we are able to cope with the stresses and demands that we will face in our admittedly very challenging professional experiences.

People are at less risk for burnout if they feel they have some degree of control or influence over their work situation, believe that they are important enough to be treated fairly, and value the work they do and are committed to it. We need to create opportunities for renewal, but this is a shared responsibility. We need to talk to one another. We need to recognize that when someone seems to be withdrawing that that’s a cause for concern and requires a check-in.

- “How are you doing?”
- “Is everything OK?”
- “Do you want to come out for lunch with us?”

These are the sorts of questions we owe it to ourselves and others to ask. It’s often been said that there is safety in numbers, and there is a lot of truth to this when we think about how we can lessen the negative effects of trauma we may experience as sexual violence preventers.

Burnout

Although volunteers may experience levels of burnout (physical and emotional exhaustion that comes with high pressure jobs, low satisfaction, feelings of powerlessness and of being overwhelmed by their work), this is a phenomenon we would expect to see mostly among CoSA staff members and coordinators. While people need a rest and perhaps re-assignment, burnout doesn't fundamentally alter a person's "world view" the way vicarious trauma does. Burnout doesn't ordinarily rob us of the ability to feel compassion, to care, and to attend to people's needs. Burnout is not related to trauma.

Sometimes burnout is a result of poorly maintained personal boundaries, such as not being able to say no. Many core members are often very needy people, and their demands on your time and what they think you should be able to do for them are often unrealistic. You need to be able to draw the line: if you are a volunteer, you promised to donate one to two hours of your time per week, and that's all. If you are a coordinator, you have your hands full just keeping the CoSA operational with funds and enough volunteers to match the number of core members you have. If you are also sitting on each and every circle each week, you will have no time for your own self-care. Whether you are a volunteer or a staff member, if your reason for being a part of CoSA was to "fix" or "change" your core member, you've got the purpose of CoSA wrong. You may be feeling frustration that he is just not "getting it," and perhaps feeling like you are working harder than your core member. That's a signal for you to step back. Time-management problems can exacerbate feelings of spinning your wheels, and you may generate some internal thoughts where you question whether your involvement in CoSA is worth it. You may feel like you are seeing little progress in the circle's work, and you may feel isolated and unappreciated. These are all signs that you need to talk with your coordinator if you are a volunteer, or with your advisory board if you are the coordinator.

The last point about feeling alone touches on a core principle within CoSA, and one we can never emphasize too much. Feelings of being alone and isolated should never be ignored. The core principle, "no one does this alone," is there for a reason. If you feel alone, or that you're burned out, or that no one else understands you, these are all signs that something is wrong, perhaps even seriously wrong.

Whether it's compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma or burnout, something is not working as it should, and you may be experiencing some fundamental changes in your world view and core beliefs. You need to talk to the other members on your circle, to your coordinator, or to your own support network such as family and friends (while maintaining confidentiality, of course). Your advisory group should have planned for some counseling resources for anyone who encounters unexpected reactions to CoSA work, and those should be made available to you. The important thing to remember is that many have survived similar symptoms before you and you will be okay. Recovery and healing are available, and you're not crazy: many fine and concerned citizens, like nurses, fire fighters, police officers, treatment providers, other CoSA people, all of us who confront the aftermath of violence in our communities, are susceptible to being affected by that violence, as we should be. If we weren't, then there would really be something wrong!

RESEARCH EFFECTIVENESS

Shortly after Circles of Support and Accountability emerged in the mid-1990s in Canada, it was apparent that a research model needed to be built into the CoSA endeavor. Whenever funding is obtained from government budgets, it is reasonable to expect that someone in that bureaucracy will ultimately want to know what the money is being spent on and whether or not it is being spent wisely. Typically, governments fund agencies who provide services in keeping with the mandate of the administration; however, CoSA represents something of an anomaly in this regard, which has implications for research. As we outlined in the beginning sections of this guide, Circles of Support and Accountability in Canada began as a grass-roots response to a specific problem and grew as a partnership between the government and the community (ultimately, as represented by the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario, but not until almost two years after the first circles were formed). This is how a number of other projects were initially developed internationally. How a project comes into being can ultimately cause some key limitations in how CoSA research can be conducted. For some projects, the opportunity to be more thoughtful in both preparing for and implementing CoSA projects has provided a greater degree of flexibility in designing and conducting outcome research (e.g., comparisons of rates of reoffending between CoSA core members and others who were not in a CoSA), including use of randomized controlled trials, which we will address below. A very helpful summary of the CoSA research literature to date was recently published by Clarke and associates (Clarke, Brown, & Vollm, 2017).

Indeed, choice of research methodology to establish efficacy is particularly on point when one discusses the CoSA efficacy literature. Controversy remains in the sexual violence field as to the necessity of randomized controlled trials (RCT) to establish the veracity of outcomes of various programmatic initiatives. While Marshall and Marshall (2007, 2008) assert that RCT evaluations are not required to make statements about the effectiveness of interventions, others (see Seto, Marques, et al., 2008) have submitted that we cannot know for sure whether our methods to reduce reoffending are truly related to the interventions at hand (i.e., CoSA) without such rigorous scientific methods. Our position has been that evaluating CoSA outcomes requires a certain amount of forethought, which is not always available given the way that some projects come into being. Conceiving of and implementing a RCT evaluation requires

considerable preparation, long before anyone is ever randomly assigned to a “treatment” or “control” condition.

Early in the Canadian CoSA experience, placement in a circle was contingent on perceived (as opposed to assessed) level of risk and need, a general lack of community support external to a circle, and availability of volunteers. Those inaugural circles came into being some five years before the release of the Static-99 – the most widely used actuarial risk assessment instrument in sexual violence prevention. As we noted earlier, both Charlie and Wray were assessed using an early tool known as the Violence Prediction Scheme (Webster et al., 1994). In hindsight, it may have been advantageous for CoSA pioneers to have given greater consideration to the ultimate need for efficacy research, but that was simply not part of the equation when they were grappling with how to deal with the first high profile offenders ultimately accepted into the fledgling CoSA framework.

Many CoSA projects in other jurisdictions followed a similar path to that experienced in Canada. In Vermont, circles are used for all kinds of serious offenders, not just those who have sexually offended (see Fox, 2014; Wilson et al., 2017). In that state, CoSAs are run by community-based justice centers, which leads to a degree of flexibility in the criteria for admission of program participants; however, that ultimately renders as challenging the level of consistency needed for proper evaluation. Last, the Vermont Department of Corrections is not equipped with a dedicated research department, which limits the degree of organization support for research with intricate methodologies. This limitation has not affected Minnesota, where the CoSA project is part of the Department of Corrections program options – leading to greater bureaucratic structure and where there is a dedicated research branch (see Duwe [2013], who has completed the only RCT evaluation of CoSA to date).

Quantitative Outcomes

Since an RCT was not an option under the given circumstances in the first Canadian projects, Wilson and associates (Wilson et al., 2007c; Wilson et al., 2009) used a quasi-experimental design (i.e., matched comparison), which admittedly came with some drawbacks. The first Canadian evaluation (Wilson et al., 2007c) employed a matched-comparison design to investigate relative rates of general, violent, and sexual recidivism in 60 men in a CoSA and 60 men who did not benefit from a CoSA. Substantial reductions in each domain were noted – 70%

for sexual reoffending, 57% for violent reoffending, and 35% for general reoffending (figures are embedded; sexual = violent = general). A Canadian national replication study (Wilson et al., 2009) gathered core member data from seven CoSA projects across the country and matched them to other sexual offenders using a methodology similar to the first study (Wilson et al., 2007c). This second Canadian study consisted of a matched-comparison of 44 CoSA participants and 44 non-participants with similar outcomes to the first study: 83% reduction in sexual recidivism, 73% reduction in violent reoffending, and 71% reduction in general reoffending.

From 2002 on, British CoSA personnel were contributing to the published literature (see Wilson & Saunders, 2003). Investigations of CoSA process and recidivism rates followed, with initial results being roughly similar to those achieved in Canada (see Bates, Macrae, Williams, & Webb, 2011; Bates, Saunders, & Wilson, 2007). Using a matched-comparison design similar to their Canadian colleagues, Bates and associates (Bates, Williams, Wilson, & Wilson, 2012) published findings showing a 75% reduction in sexual or violent reoffending.

As noted above, the only peer-reviewed outcome study in the US (Minnesota) to date has been published by Duwe (2013).⁸ Because Mn-CoSA is part of the Department of Corrections, it had the luxury of a lengthy period of consideration prior to implementation of CoSA. As a consequence, Duwe was able to establish a research protocol using an RCT design. His preliminary study (N = 31 for each group: CoSA vs. No-CoSA) failed to show any significant reductions in sexual reoffending due to a quite limited follow-up period (two years) and limited sample size, but significant reductions in hazard ratios were shown for three of five important outcome indicators (62% fewer rearrests, 72% fewer technical violations, and 84% fewer reincarcerations for any reason). Hazard ratios were notable, but not significant for reconvictions (57.1%) and resentencing (37.6%). In a recent discussion (G. Duwe, personal communication, 08/11/2017), Duwe reported that his RCT project now has 50 subjects in each group, with emergent significant differences in sexual recidivism.

Over and above the recidivism data reported in his original study, Duwe (2013) conducted a cost-benefit evaluation that showed an 82% return on investment in regard to community safety. Other jurisdictions have also conducted cost-benefit analyses. In the U.K., Elliott and Beech (2013) found that the cost-benefit ratio was marginally positive and at least broke even when considering only tangible costs. Elliott and Beech theorized further that the

⁸ A quantitative report from Vermont is forthcoming.

benefit to society may be five to ten times greater when intangibles (e.g., harm to victims, families, communities) were considered. In Canada, a National Demonstration Project evaluation (Chouinard & Riddick, 2015) demonstrated a \$4.60 return on investment for every dollar spent on CoSAs in Canada.

To summarize the CoSA quantitative outcome study research conducted to date, it is fair to say that we have five evaluations from three countries showing markedly similar results – lower rates of sexual, violent, and general recidivism for core members with sexual offense history and profiles marked by moderate to high levels of risk and need. However, each of these studies has its foibles, both individually and as part of the collective – whether that has to do with difficulties in matching, a lack of full information on what happened with all core members, and unavailability of some potentially important data-points for study. At this point, we have five evaluations with relatively small sample sizes and short follow-up periods. Because the outcomes are similar, we can certainly be encouraged and believe that there is something happening in CoSA; however, it is premature to say that the research conducted to date has *definitively shown* that CoSA is effective.

Qualitative Evaluations of Effective Factors

Beyond simply looking at relative rates of reoffending between groups of CoSA participants and comparison subjects, it is critically important that we try to better understand the processes and dynamics that occur in CoSA on more human and organizational levels. A number of CoSA studies have identified effective factors, based on qualitative evaluations. Early attempts at adding some process understanding to the CoSA research literature were quite rudimentary in nature (see Wilson et al., 2007a,b). In that early Canadian context, questionnaires were created to ask stakeholders in a variety of roles *vis a vis* CoSA about their respective experiences of the model. Wilson and associates obtained the following information:

- **Volunteers**

- Most volunteers were motivated by a “need to be involved” in their community
- A majority of volunteers were from faith communities
- Almost all volunteers had had prior volunteer experience
- One-third had been in two or more circles
- Almost half had been volunteering for more than two years

- Two-thirds of volunteers felt well-supported by the organizational framework
- Half believed that professional support was available
- More than three-quarters of volunteers felt a sense of teamwork in CoSA
- **Core Members**
 - After being in a CoSA, core members felt less nervous, afraid, and angry
 - They believed that their perspectives were now more realistic
 - They felt more confident and accepted, and experienced pride in not reoffending
 - Core members expressed that, without involvement in a CoSA, they would have
 - Had difficulty adjusting
 - Had difficulty in relationships
 - Become isolated and lonely
 - Turned to drugs or alcohol
 - Reoffended
- **Professionals**
 - Two-thirds of professionals involved in CoSA as part of the outer circle noted that they had specifically been asked to provide knowledge or expertise to an inner circle, many on numerous occasions, and with a general sense that the information was useful and important
 - Professionals were impressed by the level of support offered to core member
 - Professionals expressed a degree of concern regarding inadequate treatment resources, the potential for boundary issues in circles, and some concerns regarding organizational structure
- **Community-at-Large**
 - A group of community members without any obvious prior knowledge of CoSA was surveyed
 - Almost three-quarters identified some experience in volunteering
 - Half reported some experience with corrections
 - Slightly less than half of those with no prior experience of corrections had heard of CoSA prior to being surveyed

- Only 10% of community members surveyed would have been okay with a known sex offender living in their neighborhood, prior to hearing about CoSA
- 85% were pleased to learn of the existence of the CoSA initiative
- Two-third of community members noted that their feelings about a specific sex offender would change if they knew the person in question belonged to a circle
 - 100% of those community members stated that they would feel more positive about the core member living in their neighborhood

Also in Canada, Hannem (2013) described effective factors based on an ethnographic study of the two circles in which she participated for six years, and on interviews with volunteers. She found that many circles had a family-like atmosphere to them and that the quality of relationships in CoSA is strongly related to the success of any individual circle. As part of a multi-year national demonstration project in Canada, Chouinard & Riddick (2015) developed a theoretical model of COSA effectiveness, based on a multi-methods evaluation of 13 CoSA sites in Canada. They noted that behavior change was supported by the circle processes of addressing problematic behavior, modelling prosocial approaches, supporting engagement in appropriate leisure, providing opportunities to develop social skills and a safe place to practice them, and holding core members accountable for their own capacity building.

In a UK-based case study, Bates et al. (2007) reviewed the first 16 circles in the UK and identified their unique contribution to relapse prevention. They found that core members expressed positive experiences of being held to account, but *not being abandoned*, even if reoffending occurred (e.g., many circles continued to have contact with core members who were reincarcerated for a variety of reasons; this has also happened in Canada and the US). Additional work done in the UK by McCartan and associates (McCartan, Kemshall, et al., 2014) showed positive changes in both core member attitudes and motivations in the community as a consequence of involvement in CoSA. Core members identified receiving support to engage in prosocial activities and had an opportunity to discuss offense-related behaviors and pursue safer options. Nonetheless, some difficulties were noted regarding difficulties in core member self-management, limited engagement with volunteers, and problems with openness and honesty.

Höing, Bogaerts, and Vogelvang (2013) developed a model of effective factors and expected outcome based on a grounded theory analysis of circle narratives of core members,

volunteers, and circle coordinators in the Netherlands. They identified that many core members are struck by the voluntariness of the project; specifically that people who volunteer in CoSA do so out of the goodness of their heart and that no payment is involved. Interestingly, the concept of “friendship” common in Canadian circles is not as pronounced in European contexts (Höing et al., 2013); although all relationships in CoSA appear to require trust, openness, caring, and respect.

In the United States, Fox (e.g. 2014, 2016) has explored the effects of CoSA on various stakeholder groups in Vermont, with a focus on *how* CoSA works. She conducted a qualitative evaluation for the State of Vermont Department of Corrections, which included interviews with core members, volunteers, and professionals who were involved in the core members’ after care arrangements. As noted elsewhere in this report, CoSAs in Vermont have not only targeting sex offenders, but also offenders with other serious and/or violent crimes. She suggested that CoSA works because of its focus on responsivity concerns (e.g., institutionalization, social engagement), as well as promotion of responsibility and accountability, encouragement of core members to *rebrand* themselves as prosocial members of the community, and the ability to interact with community members who might otherwise have been disinclined to acknowledge or support persons with sexual violence histories.

In summary, we’re starting to get a better, research-based sense of what is going on in CoSA, beyond simple our belief that people who have others who care about them tend to care more about themselves and, by extension, others. The active ingredient in CoSA appears to be the relationships it fosters, but it is true that we need more research. If you are successful in building a CoSA project in your jurisdiction, remember to add your voice!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Contained in this guide is a multitude of information that should be helpful to anyone who wishes to establish a Circles of Support and Accountability project in their local community. Having read the pages in this guide, you'll understand that this is no small feat, and that successful projects are those that are community based and mindful of the needs and perspectives of a variety of stakeholder groups, including individuals released from prison. To date, the majority of CoSA projects world-wide have focused on persons who have engaged in sexually offensive conduct; although circles for persons with other types of offense histories are also starting to emerge. Whatever the core member's history of criminal behavior, we know that returning to the community after incarceration can present myriad challenges; especially for those with sexual offense histories. Indeed, CoSA began as a grass-roots effort to provide support and accountability to high-risk/high-need individuals with little to no community ties or skills necessary to negotiate integration with the community post-release.

Throughout our involvement with various CoSA jurisdictions across the United States, Canada, the UK, and elsewhere, we've learned a lot about how to do circles-work effectively. The lessons learned and observations of projects as they develop(ed) has taught us a lot about how to help others in the future. This guide includes a good deal of what we have learned. Of course, no guide will ever be able to address every possible concern; however, we believe we've given you a good sense of how to develop a CoSA-friendly environment that will allow for creative – and collaborative – problem-solving between all of the groups and individuals that your project will ultimately touch.

We wish you well in your CoSA endeavors. Remember that there are others in the world who are also doing this, and they're always happy to hear from like-minded individuals. No One Does This Alone, right? To that end, do a Google search on "Circles of Support and Accountability" and see what you get. Feel free to visit www.robinjwilson.com and peruse the information available there on CoSA. That's also where you can find links to videos and other helpful training materials. Lastly, and importantly, there are projects all over the world who are adding their voices to an international movement for evidence-based, community-based approaches to making society safer and achieving our collective goal of No More Victims. We hope to hear your voice soon.

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Appendix A

CoSA Basic Model Fidelity Checklist

Scored as follows:

0 – Item is not part of this CoSA Process:

1 – Item is present or part of the CoSA Process, but is inconsistently practiced/followed, not always followed, or under development.

2 – Item is present or part of the CoSA Process and is routinely practiced/followed.

Where noted, some items are mutually exclusive – if one item is scored, then the other item cannot be, or if one item is scored 0 then the next item can only be a 0 as well. These items are identified in the Section where they occur.

SECTION A: CoSA MODEL

CoSA originated as a community’s response to the presence of a high-risk sexual offender in their midst. It did not originate as a criminal justice systems’ response to the release of a sexual offender to live in the community. CoSA was founded by groups of volunteers, often from local faith communities. As CoSA developed, the need for involving community-based professionals, such as treatment providers, correctional officials, psychologists, members of the faith community, law-enforcement, housing, mental health, victim advocacy and addictions professionals in a supportive “outer circle” in the form of Steering Committees, Advisory Panels or Boards of Directors. It became evident that some form of volunteer preparation or “training” was necessary to prepare volunteers. Since its original conception, the basic “model” of CoSA – a community-based, volunteer-driven intervention addressing the needs of high-risk, high needs sexual offenders residing in the community following their release from prison, in relationships governed by a covenant – has been adapted to meet local needs. To date, the research literature has been developed around the basic or “generic” model, as outlined below. Local CoSA sites should demonstrate good fidelity with this basic model if they wish to remain within the research paradigm of CoSA. Deviations should have a rationale and be documented.

Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments

1.	Local CoSA Site's model adheres to the basic design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community-based; ○ Volunteer-driven; ○ Volunteers supported by paid staff; ○ Has an identifiable "outer circle" membership (e.g., a Steering Committee), comprised of local professionals 		
2.	Local Site's model, and any deviations from the generic model and rationale are documented by the Site.		
3.	Local CoSA Site's model is developed from the relevant literature and research on CoSA in Canada, and adheres to the basic design of an "inner circle" supported and accountable to an "outer circle."		
4.	Local CoSA Site's model is based on and uses restorative justice principles, which are clearly documented;		
5.	Goals and objectives (e.g., Mission Statement, Ethic Model) of the CoSA Site are documented and available for public review.		
6.	The site targets primarily high-risk sex offenders for inclusion in circles.		
7.	A basic covenant is established at the beginning of the circle process, and a process for refining and developing a more comprehensive covenant is also defined and initiated.		

SUM Scores 1 - 7

SECTION B: GOVERNANCE

This sector addresses an important part of CoSA work that involves governance and organizational structure. Safety planning is the responsibility of governance, whereas organizational structure (i.e., established by the governance body) provides for a concrete, working mechanism that, in part, works to maintain the safety of the organization and its members. Some CoSA projects have printed manuals of their policies. These should define mentoring responsibilities (e.g., staff appraisals), conflict resolution strategies, crisis support, and availability of psychological assistance in the event of potentially traumatic critical incidents (**Must Score Minimum of 2**).

Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments
8.	Incorporated as a legal entity according its local law (Score Yes = 2 or No = 0) If No skip 9. And got No. 10 below		
9.	Is also a registered charity (e.g., in the U.S.A, a 501(c)(3)) according to its local law (Score No = 0) (If No to 8. above, then must be No to 9 as well).		
10.	Guided by an Advisory Committee, or Steering Committee or Board of Directors comprised of local professionals who meet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rarely (or only if needed) Score = 0 - Annually or semi-annually Score = 1 - Monthly or more often Score = 2 		

SUM Scores 8 - 10

SECTION C: POLICY AND OPERATIONS

While individual locations will likely have a different set of policies and operating practices established according to local law and customs, affiliation with sponsoring bodies, there will be some common policies and practices between CoSA Sites offering fidelity in terms of “common” policy items and practices. Whatever differences might be expected, each Site’s policies and practices will have been published and re well-known within their Site and their community.

Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments
11.	Policies are established by the Site’s governance body.		
12.	Policy around volunteer eligibility and recruitment is documented.		
13.	Policy around Core Member eligibility (i.e. “target population”) and recruitment is documented.		
14.	Policies are documented in a Policy Manual or similar, which		

	is maintained for review by staff, volunteers, and others as deemed fit.		
15.	Policy around non-religious affiliation, proselytizing, “preaching” and religious recruitment is documented.		
16.	Policy defining the need for, type and duration of volunteer preparation (“training”) is documented.		
17.	Policy defining both the extent and the limitations of Support and Accountability in the CoSA context is documented.		
18.	Policy governing volunteer and staff appearances in court on behalf of Core Members is documented.		
19.	Policy governing Core Member and Volunteer relationships following the closure of a Circle is documented.		
20.	Policy governing respectful relationships, non-violence and sexual harassment is documented.		
21.	Site Policy requires the development of CoSA Covenants in each circle.		
22.	Standard operating procedures (SOPs), or similar based on policies adopted by the Site’s governance body (e.g., confidentiality practices, practice around suspected breaches, criminal activity, circle meeting process, reporting requirements, attendance requirements, documentation, and other such routines, and as described above) are documented and available to all staff and circle volunteers.		
23.	Volunteer preparation (“training”) manuals/procedures are prepared and available for review.		

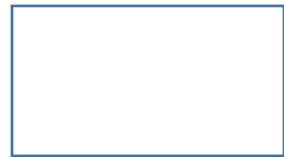
SUM Scores 11-

SECTION D: LEADERSHIP

CoSA day-to-day operational management is the usual responsibility of a “Site Coordinator,” a “Project Manager,” or a “Program Director.” The common practice has been to refer to this person as the “CoSA Coordinator,” both in Canada and the United States. Regardless of its title, this post requires effective management and leadership skills. This sector of the fidelity check list refers to the importance of leadership. Effective leaders and managers are assumed

to be generally good in terms of relationship and structuring skills, as well as good managers of human resources, time and budgets. They should also be particularly knowledgeable about offender reintegration, especially sex offender re-entry dynamics. They should also be familiar with the CoSA model as it exists generically in the literature, and be acquainted with the literature regarding the different types of sexual offending, treatment and re-offending risk assessments. They should have their own social support system, and be favourable disposed to clinically relevant and psychologically informed human service. This person is responsible for implementing the core principles of CoSA, and maintaining program integrity. Effective leadership in this role will take the steps required to develop program awareness and “champions” both inside and outside of the agency. Effective leaders will be dutiful managers of staff, and will ensure their CoSA program is routinely evaluated and accredited.

Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments
24.	There is an identifiable person who is responsible for day-to-day CoSA co-ordination, volunteer and (where applicable) staff management and leadership:		
25.	This person is qualified by a combination of education and experience in offender re-entry, project management, volunteer management experience, or other combinations of skills as documented.		
26.	This person’s leadership position (e.g., Coordinator, Project Manager, etc.) is defined in a written job description.		
27.	Is directly responsible for and involved in recruiting, screening and supervising training Staff.		
28.	Is directly responsible for and involved in recruiting, screening of Volunteers.		
29.	Is directly responsible for and involved in recruiting and screening Core Members.		
30.	Is directly responsible for and involved in co-ordinating and delivering Volunteer training with local professional involvement.		



SUM Scores 24-31

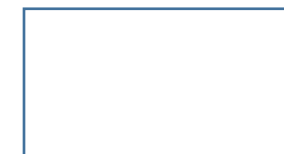
31.	This person has received expert training and certification in the use of an established, actuarial, dynamic risk assessment such as the CoSA Dynamic Risk Assessment tool.		
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SECTION E: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community safety is a prime concern of CoSA projects across the country. Community safety means recognizing that no one really is alone and that no one should ever attempt to do CoSA work alone. Community engagement is the keystone of CoSA success, while teamwork and partnerships embody the principles that *No one is disposable* and no one is alone. The following Fidelity Check List Items are designed to capture community engagement practices as recommended by CoSA Canada and the “Commonalities Documents” ratified by each CoSA site in Canada at the Ottawa National Gathering in 2012.

Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments
32.	A single Site Point Of Contact exists for local Community partners, media, and other key agencies, and has been well published by way of a Site website, local print and electronic (including broadcast and social) media.		
33.	Relationships exist with community groups (e.g., community awareness and orientation campaigns; educational events; faith community outreach; post-secondary educational institutional outreach; news media contact; Other re-entry/reintegration service providers; addictions and mental health service providers, victims advocacy groups; veterans services, etc.).		
34.	Relationships exist with key Criminal Justice Sector partners (e.g., law-enforcement agencies; correctional and related governmental agencies; forensic professionals; mental health centers and workers; addictions agencies).		
35.	Relationships are fostered with police agencies.		

36.	A strong relationship with local Christian and non-Christian faith Community partners (e.g., Chaplains, churches, multi-faith organizations, pastoral associations, etc.).		
37.	Site has engaged community partners through presentations, talks, information sessions, attendance at meetings, through workshops and through media interviews. provided orientations, familiarizations to local corrections and criminal justice staff;		



SUM Scores 32-37

SECTION F: CIRCLE START-UP AND COVENANTS

A Circle Of Support and Accountability has a beginning that is commonly around a Core Member's release from prison. A circle begins when the complete circle (all volunteers) are assigned and meet with a Core member for the first time. Ideally, this will be several weeks or a month prior to the Core Member's release. Basic "covenants" are established during this time, and if needed, a process for refining and developing a more comprehensive covenant is also defined.

Covenants are not merely behavioral "contracts" as described by some (e.g., Elliott, Zajac, & Meyer, 2013). When described as such, the value-added nature, and deeper resonance that covenants have over contracts is missed. CoSA is not sex offender treatment, and Covenants are not treatment plans. Covenants do not set treatment goals or outcomes. Covenants are mutually agreed upon frameworks guiding one of the most basic and essential elements of a circle of support and accountability, the human relationship based on evolving trust, freedom and friendship that is a prime goal of CoSA. Covenants contain elements of mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and accountability expectations, and respect. They take pains to build relationships based on consensus rather than power and control.

Covenants help establish appropriate boundaries, such as "limit-setting." Some limits are defined by the Circle's agreement around confidentiality. Confidentiality is assured within a circle, and is at the same time is held in balance with safety; it is proscribed by certain limitations, for example, around unhealthy, unlawful behavior, and behavior that contributes to escalating risk. Covenants define the mutually agreed upon expectations, limitations and processes that will be followed should expectations fail or limits be exceeded. They define practices that will be followed in the case of other types of conflicts as well.

Everyone in the circle signs the Covenant as an expression of their commitment to its contents. Covenants can be amended from time-to-time through consensus.

Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under	Comments
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		Development = 1 Yes = 2	
38.	Covenants are developed collaboratively by everyone participating in the circle.		
39.	Covenants are prepared at the beginning of each Circle.		
40.	Covenants are formally signed by everyone in the circle, and documented.		
41.	Covenants define confidentiality, differentiate between confidentiality and secrecy.		
42.	Covenants establish well-defined limits to confidentiality.		
43.	Covenants define consequences and processes to be followed in the event limitations are exceeded or “breached”.		
44.	Covenants define expectations for all members of a circle (including the core member), such as attendance at meetings, appropriate behavior, transparency and accountability.		
45.	Covenants include the aims and goals of the CoSA Site, and those of the circle.		
46.	The Site has a procedure in place for individuals who are not literate, or who do not speak the language.		

SUM Scores 38-46

SECTION G: CORE MEMBERS			
Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments
47.	Criteria for core member selection has been documented, and is in keeping with the published literature (e.g., is a sex offender; is considered to be high risk for sexual reoffense; has little or no <u>pro-social</u> community support upon release to the community; has volunteered to be in a circle, and is taking reasonable responsibility for his or her sexual offenses and		

	other criminal behavior).		
48.	Core member selection criterion is easily linked to the Site's stated goals.		
49.	Core member referrals are solicited, and there is a documented referral process that is routinely followed, with exceptions or deviations also documented.		
50.	Referrals are accompanied by complete file information detailing the core member's offense history, index offense, and participation (or not) in institutional sex offender treatment, and any other relevant details.		
51.	Each Core Member has a file maintained with pertinent information by the Site (e.g., Birthday, referral records, criminal history, offense patterns and crime cycle, and attendance at meetings and meeting records, etc.).		
52.	Intake interviews with the Core Member are conducted.		
53.	Intake interviews are always conducted pre-release wherever possible.		
54.	Decision to accept a Core Member or not is made by the CoSA Coordinator in consultation with his or her Governance Body.		
55.	An evidence-based risk and needs assessment (e.g., CoSA Dynamic Risk Assessment/Stable 2007-R) is performed by Site manager/staff during selection process.		

SUM Scores 47-55

SECTION H: VOLUNTEERS			
Item No.	Description	No = 0 Partially or Under Development = 1 Yes = 2	Comments
56.	A Volunteer job description is available and provided to each prospective volunteer.		

57.	Volunteer expectations and commitments, limitations and liability is documented and clearly explained to each prospective volunteer.		
58.	Volunteer recruitment criteria are documented,		
59.	There is a separate file maintained for each Volunteer.		
60.	Volunteer criminal record checks are required in all cases.		
61.	Volunteers complete application forms and submit references, and complete background and reference checks are completed for each volunteer.		
62.	Volunteers are interviewed as part of their screening process,		
63.	Volunteer orientation, basic and advanced training is provided to <u>all</u> volunteers.		
64.	Training manuals and resources are provided to each volunteer.		
65.	There is a protocol in place to be followed in the event of a crisis, such as a core member re-offending, or offending inside the circle, breaching a condition, or other risk-taking behavior is observed.		
66..	Volunteers know where to go and with whom to speak if they experience difficulties.		

SUM Scores 56-66

To calculate the overall Fidelity Score, sum each Section score, then divide by 132 (total number of items in all sections), then multiply by 100. If the overall fidelity score is below 75%, we recommend the CoSA organization examine each section to determine where it is weakest in failing to maintain fidelity with the core CoSA model, and consider modifying or strengthening its CoSA in these areas.

Example: Total Score = 90. $90/132 = .681818 \times 100 = 68.18\%$

A score of 90 reflects 68% fidelity with the core CoSA model and, therefore, the CoSA Site should re-examine which areas are least in fidelity with the core model.

APPENDIX B

Generic Job Description: CoSA Coordinator

The following description of aspects of CoSA work will be performed under the direction of _____ [appropriate board-level governance] _____:

1. VISIBLE PRESENCE

The CoSA Coordinator will assure an active presence in the community, particularly to CoSA Core Members and potential members, their families and with affiliated staff, professionals and social service agencies that will include:

- Being present and visible throughout the wider community;
- Developing and sustaining relationships with provincial and federal correctional institutions, chaplains, community corrections, other government and non-government agencies, affiliated professionals and social agencies;
- Being present, visible and available within the community and at federal-level correctional institutions, detention Centers where CoSA Core Members and potential members can be contacted;
- Making presentations to local community agencies, offender and ex-offender groups, victims and victim service agencies, faith communities, university classes, and others as requested and as appropriate;
- Referring Core Members to and consulting with appropriate individuals, groups and agencies as required;
- Working closely and collaboratively with correctional staff, local law enforcement and criminal justice professionals in the community, as well as with Institutional and Community Chaplains, and other community-based resources to identify potential Core Members;
- Responding to all media requests according to directions from the local governing body for the CoSA organization.
- Recruiting all volunteers for the inner circle.

The Coordinator will also provide supervision and oversight for CoSA Volunteers and their relationships with Core Members, and arrange for applicable resources for each.

2. CORE MEMBER

The CoSA Coordinator will co-ordinate or deliver CoSA training activities in _____
[local site area] _____, which include, but is not limited to:

- Screening potential Core Members and inviting acceptable candidates to enter into a covenant with the circle;
- Encouraging Core Members to live within covenant agreement by,
 - Disclosing to potential "circle" members the nature of their offense cycle;
 - Disclosing their self-management and release plans;
 - Agreeing to continue to deal with associated issues such as substance abuse or other criminogenic needs upon release to the community;
 - Accepting the limits of what a "circle" can provide;
 - Taking responsibility for their own actions;
 - Being willing to take measures to develop a healthy lifestyle;
 - Entering into appropriate group or individual counseling where possible and when indicated;
- Preparing circle volunteers to respond effectively to Core Members who express a desire to join a faith community, when and where appropriate;
- Preparing circle volunteers to engage and support Core Members as they encounter issues such as forgiveness, guilt, anger, hostility, pain, hurt, power, rage, self-worth, acceptance, death, trust, help, grief and other significant components of human existence and experience, and to seek referrals to professionals in the community who can provide deeper-level support or counselling.

3. EDUCATION/TRAINING

The CoSA Coordinator will coordinate or deliver CoSA training activities, which include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing an adequate volunteer screening/interview process;
- Assuring continuing adequate training programs for volunteers and staff;
- Training volunteers to become effective members of a Circle of Support and Accountability;
- Providing public education to increase community capacity to respond to the needs of the

Core Members returning to the community;

- Developing and creating appropriate promotional materials;
- Developing, conducting, supervising, evaluating and modifying various local CoSA activities as appropriate.

4. BUILDING THE NETWORK AND OUTREACH

The CoSA Coordinator must continually develop and sustain a community network and establish effective relationships and resources with individuals, various community agencies, faith groups and non-government agencies. This will provide an opportunity for effective support to Core Members and volunteers as well as a solid base for effective interventions.

Primarily through the Coordinator, the network will be maintained in various ways including:

- Accepting invitations to address groups, lead seminars, and act as the “point person,” or primary contact, and as a resource person to diverse groups at prisons, probation, and parole offices and with others, such as law-enforcement personnel in the community;
- Recruiting, selecting, training and coordinating a volunteer base in order to provide sufficient and effective circles to meet demands brought on by the release of sexual offenders in their community;
- Ensuring that volunteers demonstrate a willingness to:
 - Work from a Restorative Justice framework,
 - Participate in honest communication within a group context,
 - Assist in the practical issues that may face the "Core Member,"
 - Wherever possible and as a preferred process for conflict and dispute resolution, all issues should be resolved with the consensus of the circle,
 - Maintain confidentiality.
- Promote Restorative Justice activities, principles and practices in the community by “walking-the-walk” of restorative justice in their professional capacity as the CoSA Coordinator;
- Advocate for the needs of Core Members, their victims and survivors, and families affected by sexual violence in the community;
- Develop partnerships with the correctional and community professionals for the benefit of offender reintegration;

- Make presentations in prisons and lock-ups for the purpose of developing relationships with offenders to assist them with their reintegration plans;
- Attend meetings and conferences appropriate to the work of the local CoSA organization, and as directed by their governing body;
- Network with appropriate professionals and related community agencies with which the Core Member might be involved.
- Initiate, enter into and maintain a working and constructive dialogue with victim advocacy groups about the CoSA work.

5. EVALUATION

Participating in an annual performance review with the ___ [governing body] ____, with feedback from other committees established by the board (e.g. steering committee, advisory committee, community partners) to develop a CoSA work plan which will:

- Maintain a log indicating the individuals who are potential candidates for a CoSA,
- Maintain a database of community resources available to assist Core Members in their safe re-entry to the community,
- Provide a database of community-based resources willing to work with offenders in the local community,
- Prepare a written report on all “critical incidents,” and submit the report to the ___ [local governance body] ____.
- Help in the preparation of grant proposals and other requests for funding with members of the ___ [local governance] _____,
- Provide an annual report to the ___ [local governance] _____,
- Prepare and administer an annual budget approved by ___ [local governance] _____.

6. GOVERNANCE

The CoSA Coordinator will report directly to ___ [local governing body] ____ as well as being a liaison between the inner circle and members of the outer circle. The Coordinator will attend all committee meetings and report all CoSA activities to that body. The Coordinator will solicit professional advice when appropriate regarding circle activities or needs of a Core Members and staff.

APPENDIX C

Volunteer Interview Guide

Name of applicant: _____ Date: _____

Name of interviewer: _____

1. What your understanding of Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA)?

2. Tell us about other volunteering you have done.

3. From your experiences, what do you think makes an ideal volunteer environment? (If you have no other volunteer experiences, just draw on your own workplace/school experiences.)

4. Tell us why you feel you might be suited to volunteer with CoSA. Do you have particular skills you feel you can particularly contribute?

5. What do you hope to gain personally and/or professionally from volunteering with CoSA?

6. What types of personal, professional or family stresses have you experienced in the last few years, and how did you cope? (e.g., separation/divorce, death, relocation, accident, change in employment, being a new parent, etc.)
7. Have you, a loved one, or close friend ever been a victim of sexualized violence? Can you talk a little bit about this experience?
8. How would you describe a “good supporter”?
9. What does “accountability” mean to you?
10. What do you think are the most important things to keep in mind when supporting a core member?
11. What particular challenges do you think you will come across?
12. What do you anticipate the most difficult/challenging part of this work?
13. Do you have particular spiritual, political or philosophical beliefs that you think would help you in the work of CoSA?

14. What do you think is your strongest asset?
15. What area do you think you need to improve/work on?
16. Tell us about your reactions when you hear about court cases, and in particular those relating to sexual offenses, in the media.
17. How would you handle a situation when you disagree with a team member's point of view?"
18. If you could change one thing in our justice system, what would that be?
19. On one of your check-in meetings with the core member, you notice he is behaving 'strangely', or is displaying a noticeably different mood than normal or expected. How would you handle this?
20. One day the core member says that he has something very important he needs to tell you – and only you. How would you handle this?

21. In order to support a core member effectively, volunteers need to be able to make some adaptations in their personal and/or professional life. How would volunteering with CoSA fit in with your family and professional life?

 22. Can these three questions be split? Or do you want all three in one? Would you please describe your understanding of confidentiality around Core members? Around other Circle members? Are there times, in your opinion, when confidentiality should be breached?
-

Other comments by interviewer:

- Overall communication abilities
- Personality/characteristics which were noticeable as either positive or negative: confidants, articulation, thoughtful answers, vagueness, vivaciousness, hyperactivity, aggressiveness, assertiveness, accommodator, pleaser, meek, flat affect, monotone...

APPENDIX D

Volunteer Recruitment Work Plan

VOLUNTEERS – WHAT IS DONE	By Whom	Time Frame/ Frequency	Evaluation – How do we know if it's done?
<p><u>Steering Committee/Boards/Advisory Panel</u> Purpose, Recruitment of, training for, meetings, reporting</p>	<p>This varies depending on the type of organization that exists in any given community; Regional Chaplain, Regional Coordinator, Community Chaplain; Individual interested in coordinating a local CoSA; Local Committee; A Church Pastor; provincial or national agency (e.g., an MCC; John Howard Society, etc.)</p>	<p>Usually done once with renewal or addition of members as needed. Meets monthly, or quarterly and as needed. FOR A NEW, FIRST-TIME PROJECT, WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE FIRST <u>60-90 DAYS</u> OF A PROJECT'S LIFE. IT CAN OVERLAP IN ITS LATER STAGES WITH VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND TRAINING (see below).</p>	<p>A functioning steering group, advisory panel or Board of Directors that is <u>representative of the local community</u> (e.g., members are known and credible/ respected members of the community and are drawn from a variety of sectors within the community who may have a stake in the successful functioning of a CoSA project). Is familiar with the basic functioning of CoSA and believes in the CoSA mission and is willing and able to advocate in the community for that mission; is active (observable) as a</p>

<p><u>Volunteer Recruitment Strategy</u> Approach leaders/members of the faith community to make presentations for orientation session. Advertise through local volunteer agencies, media sessions, newspaper stories, church bulletins and newsletters, correctional volunteer programs, universities and college classes.</p>	<p>PRIMARILY: Project Coordinator, assistant, or other designated volunteer or (in larger programs) a designated staff member(s);</p> <p>SOMETIMES: of the steering group/advisory panel/ board of directors; community chaplain, regional chaplain, regional coordinator, word-of-mouth.</p>	<p>Several times each year (often in the Fall and again in early Spring). However, is also ongoing. Application forms are handed out individually upon request, or following an orientation session for prospective volunteers held in conjunction with the volunteer “drive” or other recruiting event.</p> <p>FOR FIRST TIME, NEW PROJECTS, VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT WILL HAPPEN WITHIN THE FIRST 90 DAYS OF PROJECT LIFE, followed by targeted volunteer “drives” once or twice each year following. As demand for circles increases, volunteer recruitment sometimes resembles an ongoing</p>	<p>sounding board/problem-solving/advice-giving, and as a responsible oversight and accountability “agent” for the project coordinator.</p> <p>Demand for circles (e.g., offenders needing and asking for a circle at release) is being met with a corps of suitable and trained volunteers;</p> <p>The ongoing “mix” of volunteers (e.g., gender balanced, age balanced, balance between new and experienced volunteers), is capable of meeting the needs of released men who are asking for a CoSA.</p> <p>Volunteers themselves will report that the need for volunteers and the mix of</p>
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<p><u>Volunteer Screening</u> Volunteer application form is completed and submitted; background and reference checks, police records checks are performed; volunteer interviews (that follow a predetermined structure so that they are focused and consistent) is conducted; Purpose of screening is among other things to focus on volunteer availability, attitudes, values and beliefs surrounding victims and offenders, criminal justice system agencies and members (e.g., police,</p>	<p>Volunteer Coordinator, sometimes with a steering group/advisory panel/board member, project assistant, designated staff person and/or senior volunteer and occasionally a “graduate” core member. Local police may assist with free criminal records checks to the local CoSA group. References provided by the applicant are also interviewed.</p>	<p>“intake” monthly.</p> <p>Within 30 days of an applicant completing and submitting an application form. ALSO WITHIN FIRST 30 DAYS OF RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN FOR FIRST-TIME NEW PROJECTS</p>	<p>volunteers is satisfactory.</p> <p>No “waiting lists” for core members exists (e.g., under recruiting of suitable volunteers), and volunteers are not waiting around for something to do (over recruiting in excess of demand)– they are able to immediately donate their time as they had planned once they have been trained.</p> <p>A volunteer file has been created for each volunteer. Application form is on volunteer’s file. Results of police record check are documented on file. Background checks are also documented on file. Evidence that appropriate “due diligence” has been exercised by having</p>
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<p>crown, corrections, parole, probation), faith communities (emphasis on the plurality of), media, community (especially knowledge of and engagement with the community), maturity, ability to hold balanced perspectives and achieve balance in personal life</p>			<p>all screening results documented on the volunteer's file and the decision to accept or decline the application (and rationale) is also documented on file. This file is kept in a secure environment accessible only to the project coordinator and limited others such that confidentiality is ensured.</p>
<p><u>Volunteer Training</u> To ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarization with legal system as it effects core members and CoSA, particularly information about court orders and other types of orders (e.g., probation/parole orders); - Familiarization with correctional system, especially release practices and community Corrections, how risk is assessed, what are risk and protective factors and how CoSA influences those; - Understanding the need for healthy, respectful and collaborative 	<p>Project Coordinator is ultimately responsible for ensuring appropriate and timey volunteer training is conducted regularly. Local professionals and specialists, Regional Coordinator (perspective and experience sharing from other sites and locations) Community and Institutional Chaplains</p>	<p>20-30 hours and thereafter ongoing (procedures listed in CSC documentation available online, in parallel documents prepared by local sites and in documents produced by MCC Canada).</p> <p>Frequency – several times per year and as needed (incidents/identified/specialized needs), volunteer requests, availability of professionals</p> <p>Is always ongoing (e.g.,</p>	

<p>relationships with agencies and members of the criminal justice system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarization with CoSA mission, principles, processes functions (ongoing) and covenanting with core members; - Familiarization with the dynamics of sex offending (e.g., typologies, antecedents of, factors associated with, patterns, cycles and progressions, cessation of, management of, reoccurrence and reoffending; - Core member needs and assessment of needs (e.g., different classifications of needs) - Familiarization with the dynamics of, patterns of, effects of sexual victimization; needs of victims; concerns of victims; - Instruction in keeping the balance between appreciation of victims needs and core member needs and needs of self as a volunteer; - Borders and boundaries and volunteer safety issues (ongoing) - Specialized instruction for familiarization in topic areas such as addictions and substance use/abuse; mental health and comorbidity; fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and effect; social skills development; 		<p>debriefings after circle starts is in session, after incidents, as circle adjusts to length of time out, after critical incidents and/or re-offending, and as circle closes)</p>	
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<p>vocational and educational issues; gender and race issues; healthy relationships (and more as identified)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarization with news media and rudimentary skill development in dealing with media (not an expectation of volunteers). - Familiarization with interpersonal skills development and “what works” literatures focusing on mentoring relationships with core members; <p><u>Volunteer Deployment</u> Interview with volunteers regarding core member’s history; exposure to core members “file” information to secure “informed consent” to volunteer with a particular core member; Matching (where possible) according to identified strengths weaknesses, safety, volunteer preferences, to balance age, experience, gender</p> <p><u>Volunteer Appreciation</u> Formally at least once per year; ongoing</p> <p><u>Volunteer supervision</u> Co-coordinator attends circle meetings at least once per month and observes, identifies needs for additional training, briefings, and ongoing suitability of each volunteer to be on a particular circle; telephone contact with circle</p>			
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manager/keeper; outer circle identifies needs or raises issues (e.g., police, correctional officials, crowns, other agencies); maintaining contact with stakeholders and partners in the community (how are things going?). <u>Volunteer retirement</u> Exit interviewing (depends on reason – disciplinary, circle closing, change in ability to commit or completion of commitment, mismatching)			
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APPENDIX E

Volunteer Application Form (CoSA)

Your confidentiality is important to us. No information you provide will be shared outside of our organization.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code/Zip: _____

Phone (Cell): _____ Phone (Home): _____

Email: _____

Birthdate: _____

(MM – DD – YYYY)

CoSA _____ (name of your CoSA) _____ requires you to provide us with a criminal records check. Having a criminal record does not necessarily disqualify you from volunteering with us. However, we will need to know the details and talk with you about your role with our CoSA.

Have you made arrangements with us to receive a copy of your criminal records check (please circle your response)? YES NO (if not, please make these arrangements with us immediately)

Please feel free to use a Separate Sheet of Paper, to answer any one – or all – of the following questions. Be sure not to leave any question unanswered.

1. How did you come to know about CoSA?

2. Why do you want to become a CoSA Volunteer?

3. What other volunteer experience do you have?

4. Are you continuing to volunteer with any organizations, and if so, how many hours per week do you volunteer your services?
5. What are/were your duties as a volunteer?
6. Would you be willing to allow us to contact organizations you have volunteered with in the past? If so, would you provide the contact information below, please?
7. If you have stopped volunteering, would you tell us the reason for no longer volunteering?
8. Are you involved with the criminal justice system in any capacity?
9. If so, please describe your current involvement?
10. Have you ever been convicted of a crime (having been convicted does NOT necessarily prevent you from volunteering with us).
11. If so, would you tell us more, please?
12. Have you ever been convicted for a sexual offense (Again, if you have, that does NOT necessarily mean you cannot volunteer with us)?

13. If yes, would you tell us more, please?
14. Have you, or any member of your family ever been the victim of a crime, including a sexual crime?
15. If so, please tell us as much as you are able about what happened?
16. The people we circle are called “Core Members.” Core Members have a variety of backgrounds, including different sexual orientations, genders, type and age of victim, level of violence, and criminal histories. We want you to be in a circle where you feel safe, and where you feel you will be able to contribute.
17. Are there types of people with whom you *would not* be willing to work?
18. A CoSA volunteer should plan on spending at least two hours per week on CoSA activities. For the circle to develop trust and cohesiveness, we need a commitment for at least one year. Are you willing and able to make this time commitment (please circle your response)? YES NO
19. A CoSA circle is a covenanted relationship. The members of the circle (the sex offender and other members) enter a signed agreement with each other. This agreement allows the circle to hold the Core Member accountable for his/her actions, but also requires you to live up to your responsibilities to the Core Member and your fellow circle volunteers. These responsibilities include attending meetings, maintaining confidentiality, and working through issues as a team.

20. Are you willing and able to make this commitment (please circle your response)?
YES NO

21. CoSA volunteers are required to attend about ____ hours of initial training, and then on-going training several times per year. Attending training sessions is very important. We cannot place untrained or incompletely trained volunteers on a circle.

22. Are you willing and able to commit to attend CoSA training? (please circle your response)?
YES NO

23. Please provide three community references (not relatives) who have known you for at least two years. We will contact these individuals to obtain their reference as part of our screening process.

1. _____
Name Telephone or Contact Information Relationship to You

2. _____
Name Telephone or Contact Information Relationship to You

3. _____
Name Telephone or Contact Information Relationship to You

Note: Some organizations also request an employment history and/or a resume. This is up to your organization's policies, keeping in mind that not everyone has an employment history (e.g., homemakers, people with disabilities).

APPENDIX F

Sample CoSA Covenant

This is a covenant between _____ and the people in the community who have formed a Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA) around him to assist his successful, crime-free return to the community. _____ agrees to being committed to making a successful return to the community and is dedicated to doing all in his power to ensure that he will create no more victims.

Confidentiality

As the Core Member, or as a Member of the CoSA, I agree to respect the confidentiality of the CoSA. I will hold any information which is shared inside the CoSA as private and privileged information which will stay within the group unless the whole CoSA agrees that it should be released.

Open and Honest Communication

I understand that it is important to maintain a high level of trust within the CoSA. We cannot heal each other unless communication is open and honest. We recognize and appreciate _____'s openness with the CoSA and will reciprocate by being available for assistance and support, emergencies, to talk, and just for company. I agree to make the building of trust and confidence a priority, committing myself to maintaining open communication with every other member of the CoSA.

Safety of the Community

We recognize that the reason for hostility in the community is because of the fear of individuals who have committed sexual offenses. To address that fear, and as part of the CoSA, I commit myself to the safety of the community as a first priority. If at any time there is a concern about that safety, it must be urgently discussed within the CoSA.

I agree that CoSA will be aware of _____'s pattern of previous offenses and seek to prevent a re-occurrence of the circumstances which led to them. Any re-

offense, or showing high-risk behavior that could lead to a re-offense, will occasion an emergency meeting of the CoSA to deal with the situation.

Conformity to Legal Requirements

_____ will comply with the legal conditions imposed on him by _____, until they are successfully appealed or changed.

Responsibilities of the CoSA

As CoSA Members, we recognize that we have a particular role to play in support of the core member. We will fulfil those requirements to the best of our abilities.

We will be available to meet with _____ as needed, and will support and assist him as necessary by helping him locate suitable and appropriate resources to satisfy such immediate needs as residence and housing, managing leisure time, seeking employment or retraining, making contacts for medical or psychological aid, advocating with the police and media as required, and any other needs as they arise.

As the Core Member, _____, agrees to work diligently toward the over-arching, primary goal that there will not be any further victims, and to respect this agreement with each of the other CoSA members and will not change it without discussion with the whole CoSA.

Initially, the CoSA will meet weekly to update on successes and challenges, and re-evaluate the areas where support may be needed. This may be changed upon agreement by the whole CoSA group.

Initially, _____ agrees to meet with a designated CoSA member on a daily basis. After the first 30 days following release, the CoSA group as a whole will decide if this type of contact can be changed. Nevertheless, _____ will continue to make regular contact with a CoSA member, as determined and agreed in group meetings.

As _____ is used to being productive with his time, he agrees to make all reasonable efforts to use his time productively upon release. Until such time as he is employed on a full-time basis, this may mean being willing to perform day labour through an employment agency, or it may

mean offering to do volunteer labour for a community organization approved by his Probation Officer, or it could simply mean performing some volunteer repairs and maintenance in his place of residence.

The CoSA may require the Core Member to participate in counseling and other treatment deemed appropriate, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, if there are any signs of behavior that would deem this type of intervention appropriate.

Obligation to Notify Authorities:

_____ agrees to inform the CoSA of any lapses or relapses to discuss the situation together before taking any measures. Everyone agrees that a lapse or relapse needs to be treated seriously, and to include _____'s Probation or Parole Officer, who will be asked to be part of the resolution. If a breach of any condition that may have been legally imposed occurs, or if a new crime has been committed, or it is believed is about to be committed, CoSA volunteers will immediately and without fail report the incident to the CoSA Coordinator who will, likewise, immediately and without fail report the incident to _____'s Probation or Parole Officer. The CoSA Coordinator is the only individual who will make contact with authorities at any time, and if there is doubt about whether something should be reported or not, the Coordinator will be consulted, and will be the final arbiter as to whether information should be reported to a supervising agent.

I agree to observe the terms of this Covenant and to commit myself to each member of the CoSA to assist the successful completion of our purpose.

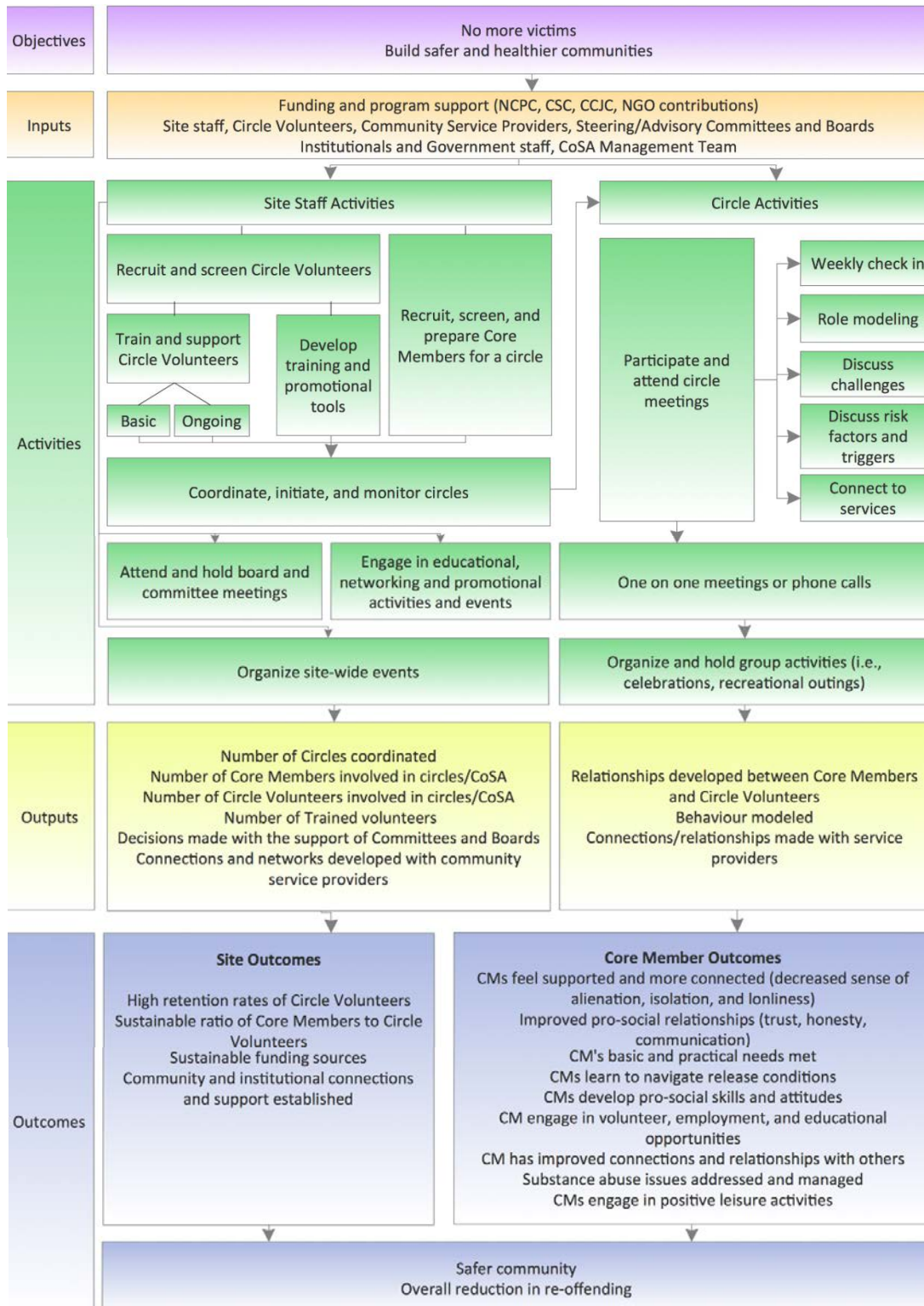
Date: _____

Signed by CoSA Core Member _____

Signed by CoSA Members _____

APPENDIX G

CoSA Logic Model



APPENDIX H

CoSA Training Videos

Training videos have been prepared as part of this How-To guide process. These videos also have PowerPoint presentations associated with them, that may be found at www.robinjwilson.com under the link for Circles of Support & Accountability. Those PowerPoint presentations are also found in this Appendix, in “handout” form.

Additionally, these videos have been uploaded to YouTube and have the following addresses:

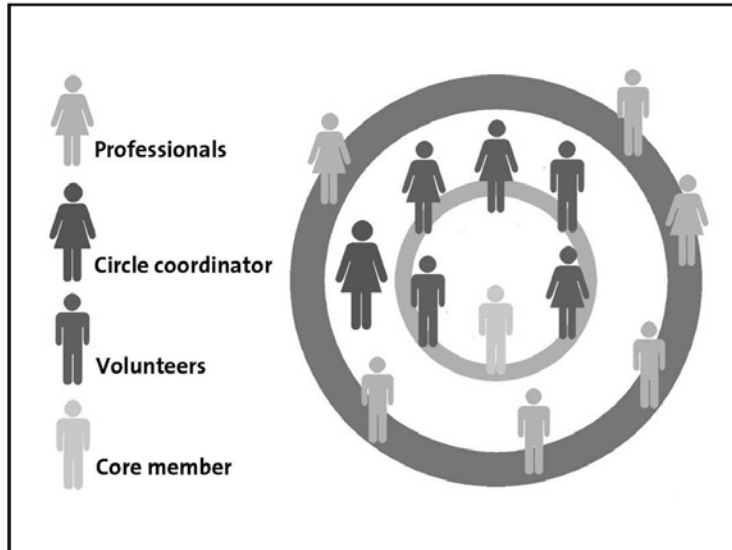
- Introduction to Circles of Support & Accountability – CoSA
<https://youtu.be/xLWZpWgPqOs>
- Static & Dynamic Risk in Sexual Violence Prevention – CoSA
<https://youtu.be/eEzoVKKO6TI>
- Covenants in CoSA <https://youtu.be/TPGjqX0SHcA>
- Intro to Sexual Deviance – CoSA <https://youtu.be/mtVKfMhdW5I>
- Working with Persons with Special Needs – CoSA <https://youtu.be/4LAZatux9W0>
- Addictions in CoSA <https://youtu.be/qn6NqwYZkns>
- Self-Care & Burnout – CoSA <https://youtu.be/q2tsU8EwMRo>

Appendix H-1

An Introduction to Circles of Support & Accountability

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/xLWZpWgPqOs>

Some slides in this presentation were adapted from materials originally created by
Kathy Fox, Ph.D. of the University of Vermont.



Desistance

Why do some people desist from crime?

External
Stabilizers

- Employment
- Marriage/family

Internal
Stabilizers

- Identity shifts
- Relabeling by others

Desistance

Maruna (2001) found that successful desistance depends upon:

- ❖ Narrative:
 - Persisters versus desisters
- ❖ Change in self-concept:
 - Disapproval of the act, not the person

What is under-theorized?

Role of the Community

- ❖ “Supervision” function within a particular context
- ❖ Rehabilitation function by modeling pro social behavior/relationships
 - contributes to identity shift
- ❖ Belonging=social capital formation
 - Increased community safety

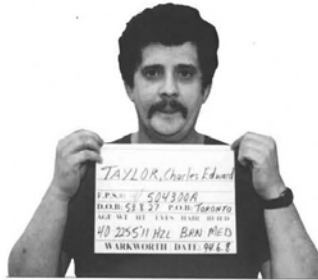
Question?

Is there a legitimate role to play for the community – for otherwise ordinary citizens – in terms of community safety when it comes to the safe return of people who have engaged in sexual violence?

Origins of CoSA: Charlie's Story

Birth of Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

Charlie's Story: 1994 - 2006



Rev. Harry Nigh
Circles Pioneer



**What is a Circle of Support
& Accountability
and where did this idea
come from?**

Agents of Change

As concerned citizens and practitioners, our goal is to ensure that all persons who have offended build a

**balanced,
self-determined lifestyle**

Contemporary research in our field suggests that learning to live a “good life” is inconsistent with antisocial behavior.

Sir Robert Peel

- ❖ Prime Minister of the UK in early 1800s
- ❖ Generally acknowledged as the “father” of modern policing
- ❖ Famous quote:

**“The police are the public
and the public are the police.”**

Nils Christie (1977)

... community is made from conflict as much as from cooperation; the capacity to solve conflict is what gives social relations their sinew. Professionalizing justice “steals the conflicts,” robbing the community of its ability to face trouble and restore peace. Communities lose their confidence, their capacity, and, finally, their inclination to preserve their own order. They instead become consumers of police and court “services” with the consequence that they largely cease to be communities.

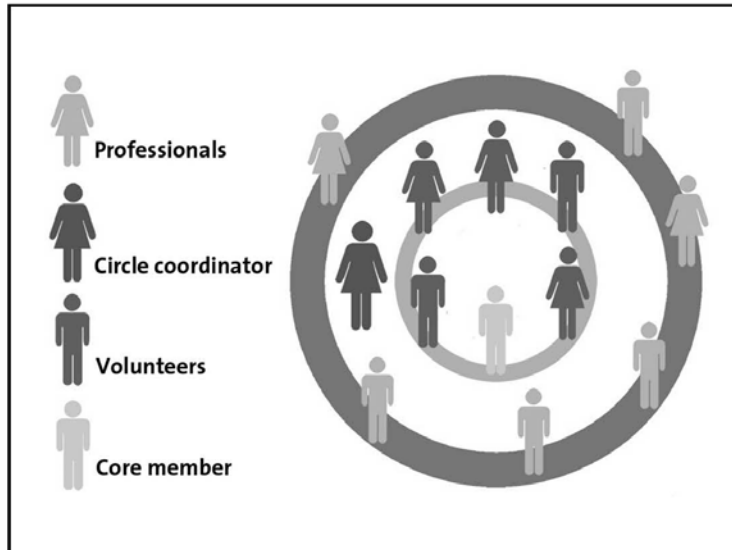
Jane Jacobs (1961)

The Death and Life of Great American Cities

The first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves. No amount of police can enforce Civilization where the normal causal enforcement of it has broken down.

CoSA - The Model

- ❖ Based on “wrap around care”
- ❖ Late 1960s to 1970s early precedents:
 - Native American/Canadian traditions
 - Canadian Larch programs
 - Kaleidoscope, Chicago
 - Alaska Youth Initiative (AYI)



CoSA - Terminology

Inner Circle: A collection of one Core Member and 3-5 volunteers

Core Member: Person who has sexually offended

Volunteer: Member of the community

Outer Circle: Professionals volunteering to support CoSA project

Not a “Program”

- ❖ Collaboration and flexibility among service providers is needed for this process to work effectively.
- ❖ For CoSA, professionalism gives way to *relational* processes needed to build and contribute to a sense of community.

Mission statement

To substantially reduce the risk of future sexual victimization of community members by assisting and supporting released men in their task of integrating with the community and leading responsible, productive, and *accountable* lives.

Core Principles

- ❖ No one is disposable
- ❖ No one does this alone
- ❖ No more victims
- ❖ Community is responsible for its victims
 and those who offend against them

Volunteer recruitment

- ❖ stability in the community
- ❖ known in the community (references checked)
- ❖ maturity
- ❖ healthy boundaries
- ❖ availability
- ❖ balance in
 - lifestyle
 - viewpoint

Topics of training

- ❖ overview of the criminal justice system
- ❖ restorative justice
- ❖ needs of survivors
- ❖ the circle model
- ❖ effects of institutionalization
- ❖ human sexuality and sexual deviance
- ❖ risk assessment
- ❖ boundaries and borders
- ❖ conflict resolution
- ❖ group dynamics
- ❖ substance abuse and impulse control

Topics of training

- ❖ building group cohesion
- ❖ circle functions
- ❖ crisis response and preparing for critical incident stress
- ❖ working with correctional officials, police, news media and other community professionals
- ❖ needs assessment
- ❖ building a covenant
- ❖ court orders
- ❖ closing a Circle
- ❖ other topics as necessary

Why Do Circles Work?

With Whom Does CoSA Work?

Traditionally, the inclusion criteria were:

- ❖ Sex offender
- ❖ High risk, high need, and/or high profile
- ❖ Little or no means of positive, prosocial support
- ❖ Willing to take responsibility for offense(s)
- ❖ Willing to voluntarily enter into a “covenanted” relationship with a Circle to do what ever it takes to ensure there are “No More Victims”

What Happens in a Circle?

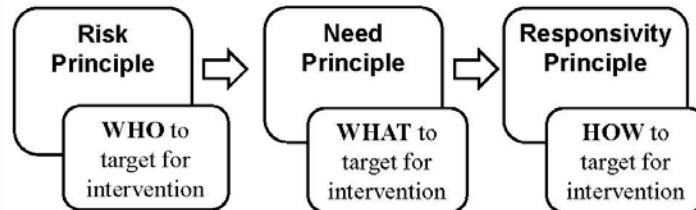
- ❖ Building a capacity for trust and friendship
- ❖ Building not just *human capital*, but *social capital* – the capacity for relationships
- ❖ There is confidentiality, but there are also no secrets
- ❖ Acceptance, non-judgment *of the person*, and reciprocity

Bonta & Andrews (2016)

Three Principles:

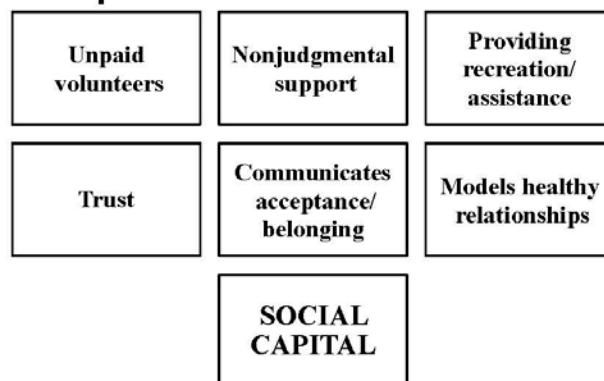
- ❖ Risk
- ❖ Need
- ❖ Responsivity

Principles of RNR Model



(Bonta & Andrews, 2016)

How does CoSA promote desistance?



Core Member experience

Without my Circle, I may have ...

- ❖ had difficulty adjusting
- ❖ had difficulty in relationships with others
- ❖ become isolated and lonely
- ❖ turned to drugs or alcohol
- ❖ reoffended

CoSA Research Interpreted

- ❖ To date, there have been five evaluations of the CoSA model
 - 2 from Canada
 - 1 from UK
 - 2 from USA
- ❖ All studies show the same basic findings
 - CoSAs can contribute to lower reoffending and better community reintegration
- ❖ However, it is important to note that, so far, these are but 5 studies with small samples and short follow-up
 - more research is necessary

Why Do You Need CoSA in Your Community?

Circles of Support and Accountability lead to:

- ❖ Reduced sexual victimization
- ❖ An engaged and better informed community
- ❖ Healthier (and, therefore, safer) communities
- ❖ Less isolated, positively motivated core members
- ❖ Lesser gaps between institutionalization, community supervision, and social re-entry

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

~ Margaret Mead ~

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Static and Dynamic Risk Potential in Sexual Violence Prevention

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/eEzoVKKO6TI>

The Realities of Sexual Offending

- ❖ 95% of individuals engaged in sexual violence are male
- ❖ A large age cohort of people who sexually offend is boys aged 13-15
- ❖ People who engage in crime have nearly four times the number of adverse childhood experiences (Reavis et al., 2013)
 - ❖ They have complex needs
- ❖ As many as 95% of people who sexually offend coming into the system are first time caught (Sandler et al., 2008)

The Realities of Sexual Offending

- ❖ Reoffense rates are lower than most people think
- ❖ Meta-analytic studies (now somewhat dated) show that about 15% will reoffend within 5-7 years post-release (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005)
- ❖ Most States and the Federal government (BJS) now report lower rates (e.g., 10% in 10 years)
- ❖ Previously sentenced individuals are more likely to be returned to prison because of technical violations than because they committed a new “crime”
 - ❖ Reiterating that they have complex needs
- ❖ Policy and practice must address those complex needs

Why Assess Risk?

1. Importance of promoting public safety
2. Need to determine who receives routine interventions and who needs exceptional measures
3. Strategic use of scarce resources (volunteers, treatment and supervision personnel)

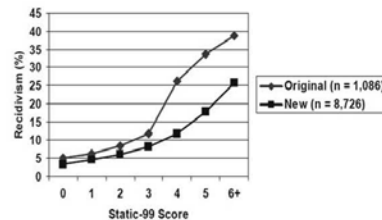
What Risk do Sexual Offenders Pose?

- ❖ At what rate do persons who have sexually offended recidivate?
- ❖ Over what period of time are they likely to be at risk?
- ❖ How should individuals who have offended be held accountable?
- ❖ What are the person's support, rehabilitative, or treatment needs?

The need for “comprehensive”

Rates of sexual recidivism have been declining for a quarter century or more; however, the greatest gains have been made in the past 15 or so years.

Arguably, this is the result of being more comprehensive in our approaches to assessment, treatment, and risk management.



The graph above (Helmus, 2009) shows how science-informed practices can lead to lower rates of reoffending.

Static Indicators

Static Risk Factors

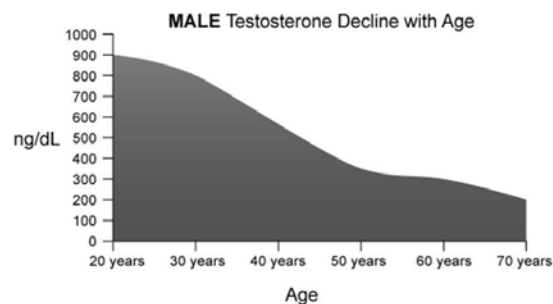
- ❖ Don't change (on the whole)
- ❖ Allow you to gauge the long-term level of risk for sexual recidivism
- ❖ Allows you to determine an appropriate level of intervention for the individual (Bonta & Andrews, 2016)

Age

- ❖ It is well known that crime is generally more of a problem of youth. That is not to say that there are not some “older” persons at risk, but they are relatively rare by comparison.
- ❖ Age-related desistance applies to sexual offending as much as it does to other types of offenses, but there are complicating factors.

Effects of Aging on Risk

Testosterone levels decrease as men age



How Much Aging is Enough?

- ❖ Clearly, there are some older individuals who reoffend sexually.
- ❖ How does this compare to other age cohorts?
- ❖ Dynamic variables can assist us in understanding the ongoing risk.
 - Sex drive / sex preoccupation

Ability to Form Long-lasting Intimate Relationships

- ❖ In keeping with the Good Lives Model, sexual offending is an inappropriate means of achieving sexual intimacy.
- ❖ People who don't offend meet these needs through relationships with age-appropriate and consenting partners
- ❖ People who have offended and who do not (and maybe cannot) demonstrate an ability to appropriately pair-bond with a partner are at higher risk to reoffend

Non-Sexual Violence

- ❖ All sexual offenses are inherently violent, but not necessarily in the physical sense
- ❖ Those individuals who used more violence than required to ensure compliance were potentially becoming aroused not only to the sexual component but also to the violence, which is a potential marker of Sexual Sadism (leading to increased risk)

Prior Sexual Offenses

- ❖ There is a some truth in the old adage “the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.”
- ❖ The more someone has engaged in sexually offensive behavior in the past, the greater the likelihood they will do so again in the future
- ❖ The more someone engages in a specific type of sexual offending (e.g., with children, exhibitionism, downloading child abuse images), the more likely it is that this represents a deviant sexual interest – the most robust predictor

Criminal Persistence

- ❖ The two major risk factors involved in sexual offending – from which all other factors are derived – are sexual deviance and core antisociality
- ❖ Criminal persistence is a good measure of core antisociality
- ❖ The more antisocial a person is, the more content they are to break societal expectations

Non-Contact Sexual Offenses

- ❖ Although they are often thought of as “nuisance offenses,” non-contact sexual offenses are actually potent indicators of sexual deviance
- ❖ Referred to in some instruments as “high density offending patterns,” offenses like exposing, peeping, making obscene telephone calls, and downloading of child abuse images are highly correlated with paraphilic interests
- ❖ Gene Abel (1988) and other sexological researchers have shown that wherever you find one paraphilia, you are likely to find another

Unrelated victims

- ❖ It has been consistently observed that most victims know the person who offends against them
- ❖ Indeed, as many as two-thirds of offenses occur in the victim's own home, at the hands of a family member
- ❖ Individuals who select victims from family environments tend to do so for reasons other than deviant sexual interests (e.g., blurred boundaries, poor problem-solving, impulsivity, alcohol/substance abuse)

Stranger victims

- ❖ Similar to the previous slide, we know that as many as 90% of victims know the person who offends against them
- ❖ Stranger-Danger needs to be qualified to highlight risks from known persons
- ❖ Individuals who choose victims outside the comparatively safer confines of a family or friendly relationship are more likely to be driven by deviant sexual interests (i.e., paraphilia)

Male victims

- ❖ We are not entirely sure why, but the research literature (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005) strongly suggests that the presence of at least one male victim of a sexual offense substantially increases the likelihood that the offender has sexually deviant interests (i.e., paraphilia)

Stable Indicators

Significant Social Influences

- ❖ The people we hang out with often have an influence on how we behave and see the world
- ❖ The research literature is clear that keeping “antisocial associates” is a robust predictor of a return to crime (Bonta & Andrews, 2016)
- ❖ We want our core members to be surrounded by law-abiding, prosocial individuals

Intimacy Deficits

- ❖ Capacity for relationship stability
- ❖ Emotional identification with children
- ❖ Hostility toward women
- ❖ Social rejection/loneliness
- ❖ Lack of concern for others

Capacity for Relationship Stability

- ❖ This is related to the static variable regarding ability to form long-lasting, intimate relationships with age-appropriate partners
- ❖ The static aspects speaks to whether he's ever been able to establish a long-term relationship
- ❖ The dynamic aspect speaks to his capacity to do so in the here and now
- ❖ Being able to meet sexual and intimate needs in a healthy relationship is risk-reducing

Emotional Identification with Children

- ❖ Some people who have sexually offended against prepubescent and pubescent children (collectively 13 or younger) have a tendency to be emotionally identified with that developmental period
- ❖ They tend to be immature and overly interested in child-centered activities, media, and pastimes
- ❖ Individuals who are emotionally identified with children often have a hard time related to adults and seem to have poor interpersonal skills
- ❖ This is not the same as parents who take interest in their children's activities

Hostility Toward Women

- ❖ Some people who have sexually offended seem unable to form warm, constructive relationships with women
- ❖ This is often because they have a prejudice against women, believing that they are a different class of people unworthy of trust or respect
- ❖ People with this orientation believe or endorse sexist attitudes, and are often adversarial towards women

Social Rejection/Loneliness

- ❖ We enjoy life by the help and society of others
- ❖ Few people achieve success and personal happiness without some help from others
- ❖ People who are lonely and prone to feeling socially rejected have more trouble in life
- ❖ Almost all people with problems in life deal with those problems more easily when they have assistance

Lack of Concern for Others

- ❖ Some individuals who have sexually offended are very narcissistic and selfish
- ❖ Their interests and concerns are more important than those of others
- ❖ Those individuals who lack empathy and who are unable to appreciate the effects of their actions on others represent a higher degree of risk for engaging in future harmful actions

General Self-Regulation

- ❖ Impulsive Acts
- ❖ Poor Cognitive Problem Solving Skills
- ❖ Negative Emotionality/Hostility

Impulsive Acts

- ❖ Most successful people engage in life planning and carefully consider their choices
- ❖ Others are easily swayed by opportunistic circumstances
- ❖ This often leads to engagement in behavior that has a high likelihood of negative consequences
- ❖ Impulsive individuals are easily bored, seek thrills, and often fail to consider personal safety or the safety of others

Impulsive Acts

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ❖ reckless driving | ❖ quitting jobs with no other job in sight |
| ❖ substance abuse | ❖ changing residences |
| ❖ “getting into” partying | ❖ unsafe work practices |
| ❖ accepting bets and dares | ❖ starting fights with men much bigger than himself |

Poor Cognitive Problem Solving

- ❖ Good problem-solvers can do three things:
 - Identify the existence of a problem
 - Generate alternative behaviors for next time
 - Assess the effectiveness of the alternative behaviors
- ❖ Many people who have sexually offended have a hard time linking their circumstances to their own choices
- ❖ The research says that being able to carefully consider options before acting aids in making choices that do not include additional offending behavior (Hanson et al., 2007)

Negative Emotionality/Hostility

- ❖ Many core members have been in “the system” for a very long time, leading to institutionalization
- ❖ While some individuals were prone to negative emotionality and hostility prior to incarceration, which ultimately influenced their involvement in poor decision-making, others obtained these traits while in prison
- ❖ Individuals who are frequently negative and hard to engage socially are statistically more likely to re-engage in inappropriate conduct, including sexual offending

Sexual Self-regulation

- ❖ Sex drive/Pre-occupations
- ❖ Sex as coping
- ❖ Deviant sexual interests

Sex Drive/Pre-occupations

- ❖ Some persons who have engaged in sexually inappropriate conduct report recurrent sexual thoughts and behavior that are not directed to a current romantic partner
- ❖ Many report engagement in casual or impersonal sexual activity that interferes with pro-social goals and activities
- ❖ Some report these urges as intrusive or excessive, as if their life revolves around sex

Sex Drive/Pre-occupations

- ❖ Some clues that your core member might be sexually preoccupied include:
 - Masturbation most days (15+ times a month)
 - Regular use of prostitutes, strip bars, massage parlors, phone-sex, sexually explicit websites (e.g., large amounts of time spent “surfing the web” for pornography sites)
 - Pornography collection (videos, magazines, parent/baby magazines, materials downloaded from the Internet)
 - A history of multiple sexual partners (e.g., 30 or more)
 - Excessive sexual content in typical conversations
 - Self-report of difficulty controlling sexual impulses
 - Any disturbing sexual thoughts

Sex as Coping

- ❖ We all have ways to deal with stress and negative emotions (exercise, wine, shopping)
- ❖ For some core members, life stress and negative emotions trigger sexual thoughts or behavior, which may be normal or deviant
- ❖ People who use sexuality to dissipate anger, humiliation, or frustration are at a statistically higher risk to engage in new sexually inappropriate conduct

Deviant Sexual Interests

- ❖ In the scientific literature, possession of sexually deviant interests was the largest contributor to reoffense risk (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005)
- ❖ These interests are sometimes difficult to assess, but looking at behavior, preference testing, and stated preferences can help to identify problem areas
- ❖ Sometimes deviance is indicated by the frequency of engagement in the behavior, while other times the unusualness of the behavior can provide clues

Cooperation with Supervision

- ❖ Often, being released to the community comes with a lot of rules and expectations for the core member
- ❖ Ultimately, we have to ask whether we feel he/she is working with us or against us?
- ❖ This can be evidenced in number of domains, including Circle meetings, probation/parole conditions, adherence to treatment, etc.

Acute Risk

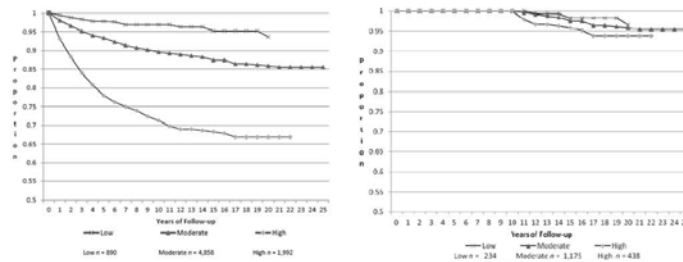
- ❖ Sometimes, the environment in which the core member finds himself can have an impact on coping abilities and temptation to reoffend
- ❖ This is where stable indicators can be inflamed by circumstance, such as in the following scenarios:
 - Increased access or proximity to potential victims
 - Increased hostility/negativity in response to a life event
 - Increased sexual pre-occupation
 - Rejection of supervision (e.g., failing to follow rules)
 - Emotional collapse (possible due to changes in life circumstances)
 - Changes in social supports (death of a friend, etc.)
 - Returning to or new use of substance/alcohol abuse

Treatment & Risk Management What does all this mean?

- ❖ Stable indicators are often our best intervention targets, but Acute indicators may greatly influence what we need to focus on in the short term
- ❖ Use of a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach best informs our support, treatment, and supervision efforts
- ❖ Working together as a team, including the core member, is the best approach overall

Are high risk offenders high risk forever?

from Hanson et al. (2014)



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Covenants in CoSA

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/TPGjqX0SHcA>

What is a Covenant?

As a noun: a contract, compact, treaty, pact, accord, deal, bargain, settlement, concordat, protocol, entente, agreement, arrangement, understanding, pledge, promise, bond, indenture, guarantee, warrant

As a verb: The landlord covenants to repair the property: to undertake, give an undertaking, pledge, promise, agree, contract, vow, guarantee, warrant, commit oneself, bind oneself, give one's word, enter into an agreement, engage

What is a Covenant?

- ❖ The Hebrew word *berith* (covenant) occurs over 280 times in the Old Testament.
- ❖ The English word covenant means "a coming together."
- ❖ The word covenant is often used to denote an agreement more solemn than a contract.

Four elements of a "covenant relationship" - Frank Damazio

1. Covenant relationship begins with a spiritual act of being knit together

Being "knit" **together** is like being chained to one another. In nearly every language, friendship is considered to be the union of souls bound together by the band of love. Covenant relationships produce a sameness – as though one soul were in two bodies. To be knit together, the strands of belief need to be tied in place. There must be a mutual personal commitment to the relationship that includes a mutual respect, resulting in building the other person and not tearing down.

Four elements of a “covenant relationship”

- Frank Damazio

2. Covenant relationship begins and grows by making and keeping covenant

The purpose of a covenant is to guarantee that the relationship will remain healthy and will last. The covenant itself is a series of words that are spoken to define the nature of the relationship and the principles of commitment to it. When covenant is the foundation for relationships, the possibility of maintaining permanence and stability is greatly enhanced.

Four elements of a “covenant relationship”

- Frank Damazio

3. Covenant relationship begins with a “generous soul” attitude

The generous soul gives not only what is valuable and suitable to the relationship, but also asks what is honorable. A “generous soul” attitude causes both people to pour out affirmation, encouragement, and words of greatness. It quickly promotes the other person over self. All relationships grow when the “generous soul” attitude is present.

Four elements of a “covenant relationship”

- Frank Damazio

4. Covenant relationship grows and stays healthy as we protect the relationship

Every relationship will have its times of testing, stretching, problems, and disruption. Outside pressures can be expected; however, we must handle these pressures wisely and successfully if we are to maintain true covenant relationships. We need to consistently protect the relationship by being faithful at all times with our words, attitudes, and actions.

Our covenants will help us resolve conflict

Community is made from conflict as much as from cooperation; the capacity to solve conflict is what gives social relations their sinew . . .

Nils Christie (1977)

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(1) The **covenant of affirmation:**

There is nothing you have done or will do that will make me stop loving you.

(2) The **covenant of availability:**

I am committed to going beyond myself, to the limits of my time and energy, I will share my knowledge, insights.

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(4) The **covenant of openness:**

I promise to be a more open person . . . disclosing my feelings, hopes, and longings. The degree to which I do so implies that I cannot make it without you . . . that I trust you with my problems and dreams, and hope you will trust me with yours.

(5) The **covenant of honesty:**

I will try to “mirror” back to you what I am hearing you say and feel. I will risk “speaking the truth in hope we will grow in friendship.

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(6) The covenant of sensitivity:

I promise to be sensitive to you and to your needs to the best of my ability. I will try to hear you--see you--anticipate where you are--and draw you out of the pit of discouragement or withdrawal. It costs to be sensitive, but sometimes through the eyes another person, we see ourselves better.

(7) The covenant of confidentiality:

I promise to keep confidential the things we share in order to provide an atmosphere of openness. Why is confidentiality so important? There can be no friendship without trust. When we trust others, we can open up to friendship and deeper relationship.

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(8) The covenant of accountability:

Accountability is the foundation of any relationship covenant for it recognizes when there is a problem and gives permission to share with others. Out of accountability flows the acceptance and forgiveness we need. The relationship helps us to work out a plan of action. It is truly a beautiful thing to be able to say, “What happens to me matters to you.”

Building relationships builds community

This is why we call ourselves “Circles of Support and Accountability.” We could as easily describe ourselves a “**communities**” of support (affirming, available, open, honest, friends, caring, accepting) and Accountability.

The covenant is the heart and mainstay of who we are, how we relate to one another, manage our conflicts and protect or friendship and our community.

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant

- ❖ **Decision-making process** (e.g., by “consensus” with that term and that process defined)
- ❖ **Confidentiality** (What is it? What are its limits? Who decides?)
- ❖ **Community Safety** (as a top priority, as well as conditions limiting confidentiality and the process for breaking confidentiality and sharing information)

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant

- ❖ **Communications:** How will volunteers, core members communicate with one another?
- ❖ **Record Keeping:** What notes, records, etc. are required to be kept, and what other notes records are or will be kept/maintained?
- ❖ **Assessment of Progress/Change:** How will a Core Member's progress and change be assessed? How often will an assessment be made, what will it look like? Who will have input to the assessment? How will progress (or lack of it) be dealt with? With whom will this type of information be shared?
- ❖ **Conformity to Legal Requirements:** (e.g., probation or parole conditions, court orders, registration requirements, etc.)

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant - Volunteers

- ❖ Meeting attendance and schedule (e.g., once weekly with individual contacts in between).
- ❖ Define support as "accompaniment" and invitations to the Core Member to take responsibility by accepting guidance, being assertive, affirming, available, open, honest, friends, caring, accepting
- ❖ And being accountable, recognizing that sometimes people need support in their bid to live an accountable life, and to be willing to offer that kind of support.
- ❖ Define Accountability in terms of accepting responsibility, considering the needs of others and being able to account for one's behavior, time, and progress, and that this is a two-way street, where the Circle Volunteers agree to provide sound modelling of acceptable, responsible behavior.
- ❖ An undertaking to share their lives in socially appropriate and situationally appropriate fashion (e.g., taking into account safety concerns, appropriate boundaries, Core Member offense characteristics, etc.).
- ❖ **A Commitment to Celebrate!** To appropriately celebrate and acknowledge major milestones (birthdays, graduations, achievements, births, deaths – and not just for the core Member), as well as significant community and social celebrations (Nation Day, Independence Day, Christmas, Easter, and other Christian or religious/ethnic holidays as appropriate), and because it feels right – with a keen eye toward restrictions, prohibitions, etc.

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant - Core Members

- ❖ Meeting attendance and schedule (e.g., once weekly with individual contacts in between).
- ❖ To share offense history in its entirety, offense characteristics, patterns, behavioral “cycles”, relapse prevention and safety plans, community safety plans, and to answer the questions of the volunteers.
- ❖ To share a copy of any and all Probation or Parole orders with the Circle and to go over them with the Circle, and to immediately advise the Circle of any changes to these documents and/or conditions.
- ❖ To work diligently toward open, frank, truthful communications as a primary means of building trust and friendship.
- ❖ To work towards being increasingly mindful of the needs and feelings of others, beginning with the Circle.

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant - Core Members

- ❖ To accept personal responsibility for himself, and to remain open to accepting guidance, being assertive, and being accountable.
- ❖ To report any lapses or relapses immediately to the appropriate Probation or Parole agent and to immediately brief his Circle as well.
- ❖ To immediately ask for help with the above if needed (e.g., to see support in the work of living accountably, and being accountable).
- ❖ Define support as “accompaniment” and invitations to the Core Member to take responsibility by accepting guidance, being assertive, and being accountable.
- ❖ Define accountability in terms of accepting responsibility, considering the needs of others and being able to account for one’s behavior, time, and progress, and that this is a two-way street, where the Circle Volunteers agree to provide sound modelling of acceptable, responsible behavior.
- ❖ An undertaking to share their lives in socially appropriate and situationally appropriate fashion (e.g., taking into account safety concerns, appropriate boundaries, Core Member offense characteristics, etc.).

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Introduction to Sexual Deviance

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/mtVKfMhdW5I>

Some slides in this PPT were adapted from materials created with Dr. Jill Levenson.

Inconsistency

One of the greatest hurdles to defining sexual deviance is a lack of clarity as to what actually constitutes offensive sexual behavior.

- ❖ What do you consider to be sexually offensive?
- ❖ How well might your “morality” match that of others or your community?

Conceptualizations of Problematic Sexual Conduct

- ❖ Deviant
 - Unusual or very atypical sexual interests and preferences
 - Not necessarily unlawful (e.g., fetishism, consenting BDSM)
- ❖ Unlawful
 - May be deviant, but does not have to be (e.g., rape, child molestation)
- ❖ Hypersexual
 - Very high frequency of engagement in behavior
 - May or may not be either deviant or unlawful

Sexually Deviant

- ❖ Behaviors that are quite atypical, unusual, or abnormal, to the extent that most “normal” individuals would consider the behaviors strange, odd, or concerning
- ❖ Not all sexually deviant behaviors are necessarily illegal (e.g., fetishes, consensual BDSM sex play), but some sexually deviant conduct is illegal in most or all circumstances (e.g., sexual molestation of prepubescent children, exhibitionism)

Sexually Inappropriate

- ❖ Is there something about the circumstances or context in which the behaviors occurred that would suggest some degree of sexual impropriety?
- ❖ For instance, were both parties consenting to the sexual behaviors (i.e., was there some element of sexual coercion?), or was there something about the relationship between the two parties that would make the conduct sexually inappropriate (e.g., sex between blood relatives)?
- ❖ In most circumstances, sexually inappropriate conduct is also unlawful.

Socially Inappropriate

- ❖ Is there something about the circumstances of the behaviors that gives cause for concern, but the conduct itself might not be necessarily deviant or inappropriate
 - e.g., consenting sex in a public place, sex between parties where a power differential might be implied, influence of alcohol or drugs
- ❖ Depending on the circumstances, socially inappropriate sexual behaviors might be illegal, but this is not absolute
 - e.g., streaking, (which is more often intended to be a joke than sexually alarming).

An important distinction?

- ❖ Is it important to distinguish between our sexual preferences and our sexual appetites?
- ❖ While everyone likely has a “perfect partner” or “scenario,” how often do we actually get that?
- ❖ Are we open to consideration of sexual partners or behaviors that are outside of our preferences (e.g., bi-curious, multiple partners)
- ❖ Does this happen in the offense histories of some of our clients?

Sexual Offender ...

- ❖ ... is a legal term and not a clinical term
- ❖ “Sexual Offender” encompasses a wide range of unlawful sexual behaviors, not all of which are diagnosable as “paraphilic” (APA, 2013)
- ❖ Indeed, it is likely that a minority of people labeled as sexual offenders are actually paraphilic or have a “sexual condition” that causes them to offend
 - Those that do, however, are likely to be at higher risk to reoffend (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005)

Consent

A particularly important concept to consider when looking at sexual offending is that of consent; especially age of consent.

- ❖ What constitutes consent?
- ❖ Who can give it?
- ❖ Under what circumstances?
- ❖ Are there personal or situational variables that would also impinge on consent?

Age of Consent

Laws vary from country to country and state to state regarding consent to sexual activity.

- ❖ Most common AOC in USA is 16 (range = 16-18)
- ❖ AOC in Canada is 16
- ❖ AOC in most European countries is 14
- ❖ Some countries have no AOC, or consent can only be given between couples who are married

More Inconsistency

Not only has inconsistency affected our ability to clearly define what constitutes an offense, it has also clouded our perceptions of cause and effect in sexual offending.

- ❖ Various theories of sexual deviance are often simultaneously complementary and contradictory

Is there a single unifying theory of sexual deviance that will ever be satisfactory to the field?

Social Learning Theory

- ❖ Modelling, observation, repeated exposure to a stimulus object, and intermittent reinforcement
- ❖ Is pornography pertinent?
 - ❖ The research literature has failed to show a connection between pornography and sexual offending, but the results are a bit complicated (Diamond, 2009; Kingston et al., 2008)

Medical Model

- ❖ Deviant sexual behavior is the result of a clinically-diagnosable syndrome
 - Paraphilia – DSM-5 (APA, 2013)
- ❖ Treatable by medical/psychiatric means
 - Therapeutic sex drive reduction (chemical castration)
- ❖ However, the problem is that there is no general psychiatric profile of a “sexual offender”
 - That is, few are “mentally ill” in the traditional sense

DSM-5 Definition of Paraphilias

“..any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners”... or alternatively “sexual interests greater than or equal to normophilic sexual interests”.

“A *paraphilic disorder* is a paraphilia that is currently causing distress or impairment to the individual or a paraphilia whose satisfaction has entailed personal harm, or risk of harm, to others”

Paraphilic Preferences

Activity

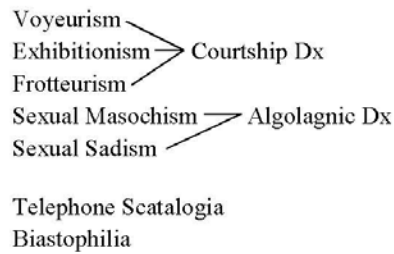
Voyeurism
Exhibitionism
Frotteurism
Sexual Masochism
Sexual Sadism

Telephone Scatalogia
Blastophilia

Target

Pedophilia
Fetishism
Transvestism

Urophilia
Coprophilia
Necrophilia
Gerontophilia



Dimensionality

- ❖ Most sexual (and paraphilic) interests are not taxonic (either yes, they are or no, they are not)
- ❖ They're more likely to be dimensional – on a continuum
- ❖ This appears to be true of both chronophilic interests (children through elderly adults) as well as sexual dangerousness (coercion through sexual sadism)
- ❖ We can look at this two ways:
 - Strength – primary or exclusive
 - Relativity – greater than or equal to “normophilic” interests

Male sexual arousal

Masters & Johnson (1966) demonstrated that the best place to measure male sexual arousal is in the penis, which experiences changes in volume and circumference in response to both internal and external stimuli

- ❖ A description of methods to measure male sexual arousal and interest is found in Wilson & Miner (2016)

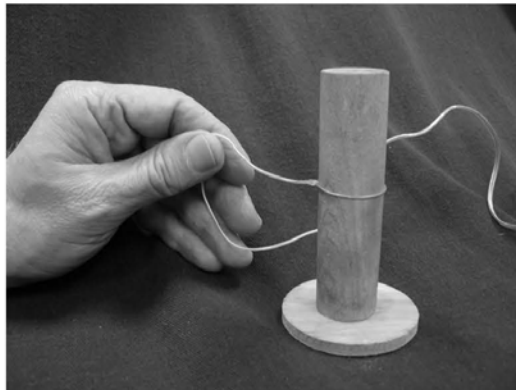
Penile Plethysmograph (PPG)

- ❖ Bayliss (1908) is believed to be the first to attempt to measure sexual arousal, in dogs
- ❖ Hynie (1934) was the first to use penile changes in study of human sexuality
- ❖ Ohlmeyer et al. (1944) constructed a crude on/off circumferential device to study nocturnal erections
- ❖ Freund (1957) is acknowledged to be the pioneer of the modern phallometric method for use in forensic and sexological research and practice

PPG Chair



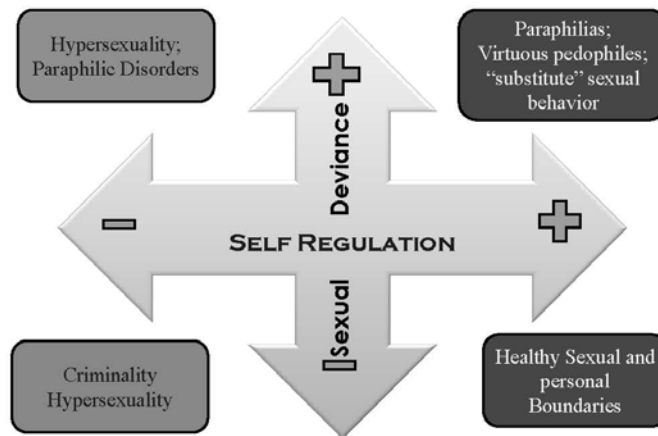
Circumferential PPG



Alternative Methods

- ❖ Controversies exist regarding stimuli used in PPG evaluations
- ❖ Visual Reaction Time methods have emerged
 - Abel Screen (Abel et al., 1998), Affinity (Glasgow et al., 2003), etc.
 - Sexual arousal vs. sexual interest?
 - Extent and quality of research may be an issue

Jill Levenson's attempt at conceptualizing sexual deviance



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Working with Persons with Special Needs

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/4LAZatux9W0>

Special Needs

Many of our core members have complex presentations that include difficulties or issues in a variety of areas we refer to as special needs:

- ❖ Mental illness
- ❖ Intellectual and other cognitive limitations

Being familiar with these conditions and their effects on core members will help volunteers to be more effective.

Mental Illness

- ❖ Mental illness is any disease or condition affecting the brain that influences the way a person thinks, feels, behaves, or relates to others and to his or her surroundings.
- ❖ Although the symptoms of mental illness can vary from mild to severe and are different depending on the type of mental illness, a person with an untreated mental illness often is often unable to cope with life's daily routines and demands.

Mental Illness

- ❖ The exact cause of most mental illnesses is not known; however, research suggests that many of these conditions are caused by a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental factors.
- ❖ Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income.
- ❖ One thing is for sure – mental illness is *not* the result of personal weakness, a character defect, or poor upbringing, and recovery from a mental illness is not simply a matter of will and self-discipline.

Types of Mental Illness

There are many different conditions that are recognized as mental illnesses. The more common types include:

- ❖ Schizophrenia or Schizo-affective Disorder
- ❖ Bipolar Disorder
- ❖ Major Depressive Disorder
- ❖ Obsessive-compulsive Disorder
- ❖ Anxiety disorders
- ❖ Pervasive Developmental Disorders (including Autism)
- ❖ Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- ❖ Borderline Personality Disorder

Mental illness is treatable

Many people with serious mental illness may need medication to help control symptoms, but also rely on supportive counseling, self-help groups, assistance with housing, vocational rehabilitation, income assistance and other community services in order to achieve their highest level of recovery.

Early Identification

Early identification and treatment is of vital importance. By getting people the treatment they need early, recovery is accelerated and the brain is protected from further harm related to the course of illness.

Post-Traumatic Stress

- ❖ We are aware that many people involved in the criminal justice system come from difficult backgrounds.
 - Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are more prevalent in forensic populations
- ❖ Many of our core members are likely to have experienced abuse and/or other unpleasant circumstances in childhood or while incarcerated.
- ❖ This is part of the “complex presentation” we have noted in other parts of our training modules.
- ❖ PTS can influence other problems and/or disorders.

Impulse-Control Disorders

Many core members will have substance related disorders such as alcohol abuse or dependence, amphetamine dependence, cannabis abuse or dependence, cocaine abuse or dependence, hallucinogen abuse, opioid dependence and polysubstance dependence. Other impulse control difficulties include gambling, kleptomania, compulsive sexuality, etc.

Paraphilias

Many core members will have diagnoses in the Paraphilias domain. These include:

- ❖ Voyeuristic Disorder
- ❖ Exhibitionistic Disorder
- ❖ Frotteuristic Disorder
- ❖ Fetishistic Disorder
- ❖ Pedophilic Disorder
- ❖ Sexual Masochism Disorder
- ❖ Sexual Sadism Disorder
- ❖ Transvestic Disorder
- ❖ Other Specified and Unspecified Paraphilic Disorder (OSPD, UPD – covers many dozens of lesser known paraphilic disorders)

Personality Disorders

Personality Disorders (PD)

- ❖ Antisocial PD (with or without Psychopathic Features)
- ❖ Borderline PD
- ❖ Schizoid and Schizotypal PDs
- ❖ Paranoid PD
- ❖ Narcissistic PD
- ❖ Histrionic PD
- ❖ Avoidant, Dependent, and Obsessive-Compulsive PDs

Antisocial Personality Disorder

Most core members will likely have difficulties in the antisociality domain. This is characterized by a pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, often occurring since the age of 15 and characterized by the following:

1. Refusal or failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviors and repeatedly performing acts that are grounds for arrest
2. Deceitfulness, repeated lying, use of aliases, or conning others for personal profit or pleasure
3. Impulsiveness or failure to plan ahead
4. Irritability and aggressiveness, as indicated by repeated physical fights or assaults

5. Reckless disregard for the safety of self or others
6. Consistent irresponsibility characterized by failure to sustain consistent work behavior or honor financial obligations
7. Lack of remorse, as indicated by being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another

Some core members with ASPD may also have been diagnosed with Psychopathy, which is a particularly strong and highly entrenched version of ASPD characterized by extreme narcissism and lack of concern for others. We once thought that “psychopaths” could not be treated, but holistic methods and models like CoSA have shown that some highly antisocial individuals can learn to live within societal expectations.

Borderline Personality Disorder

BPD is defined as a pattern of instability in relationships, poor self-image, and marked impulsiveness beginning by early adulthood as characterized by the following:

1. Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment.
2. A pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation
3. Identity disturbance: persistent unstable self-image or sense of self
4. Impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-damaging such as spending, sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, binge eating.

5. Recurrent suicidal behavior, gestures, or threats or self-mutilating behavior
6. Irritability or anxiety which usually lasts a few hours and only rarely more than a few days.
7. Chronic feelings of emptiness
8. Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger
9. Stress-related paranoia

Some people believe that BPD is a response to developmental trauma. We know that people involved in crime have nearly four times as many adverse childhood experiences as people not involved in crime (Reavis et al., 2013).

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

In Narcissistic PD, there is a great need for admiration along with a lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and characterized by the following:

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance such as exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievement
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty or ideal love
3. Believes that he is “special” and unique and can only be understood by or should associate with other special or high-status people
4. Requires excessive admiration

4. Has a sense of entitlement, such as unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with expectations
5. Is interpersonally exploitative such as taking advantage of others to achieve his own ends
6. Lacks empathy and is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others
7. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him
8. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes

Intellectual Disability and Other Cognitive Limitations

For the purposes of this presentation, we include anyone who experiences significant barriers to treatment and risk management success because of:

- ❖ Neurodevelopmental Disorders
- ❖ Other brain-based difficulties (head injuries, lesions, etc.)
- ❖ Cognitive decline for other reason

Intellectual Disability and Other Cognitive Limitations

Many core members experience difficulties in adaptive functioning, which means that they have problems coping with common life demands and how well they meet the standards of personal independence expected of someone in their particular age group, sociocultural background, and community setting (communication, self-care, home living, social/ interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health, and safety).

Neurodevelopmental Disorders

- ❖ Intellectual Disability (Intellectual Development Disorder)
- ❖ Communication Disorders
- ❖ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ❖ ADHD
- ❖ Neurodevelopmental Motor Disorders
- ❖ Specific Learning Disorder

Brain-based Limitations

- ❖ Brain injuries
- ❖ Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE), Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)
- ❖ Cognitive decline
 - Dementia
 - Parkinson's
 - Alzheimer's

FASD – What is it?

- ❖ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders are a cluster of disorders resultant from a fetus' exposure to alcohol *in utero*
 - Typically expressed in central nervous system impairment, growth deficiency, and dysmorphic facial features

FASD – What is it?

- ❖ FAS: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
 - Person meets all diagnostic criteria
- ❖ FAE: Fetal Alcohol Effect
 - Person meets some of the diagnostic criteria
- ❖ FAE now referred to as Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders (ARND)

Cognitive Decline

An interesting phenomenon we sometimes encounter is noticeable in clients who have been incarcerated for a very long time.

Sometimes, a prominent feature of their institutionalization is a kind of cognitive atrophy – likely caused by years of understimulation.

Difficulties

Core members with cognitive limitations will often experience significant limitations leading to difficulties in many or all of the following domains:

- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Home living
- ❖ Community use
- ❖ Self-direction
- ❖ Functional academics
- ❖ Sexuality
- ❖ Self-care
- ❖ Social skills and relationships
- ❖ Health and safety
- ❖ Leisure and work

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Addictions

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/qn6NqwYZkns>

Some slides in this presentation were adapted from those originally prepared by Dr. Tania S. Stirpe of the Correctional Service of Canada

What is Addiction?

- Defining addiction
- Major theoretical perspectives
- Addiction in forensic domains

Etiology of Addiction

- There is increasing support for the view that there are multiple etiologies for addiction and their presentation, which in turn requires a range of treatment alternatives – comprehensive approach.
- In short, no one theory accounts for everything regarding addictions and addictive behaviors.

Definitions of Addiction

- Addiction: derived from the Latin root *addicere*, meaning “to adore or surrender oneself to a master”
- The problem of definition is one of the fundamental issues in the substance abuse literature.
- The terms abuse, dependence, and addiction are often used interchangeably, without general agreement as to what they mean.
- There is no single definition of addiction or a universally accepted, comprehensive theory of addiction that has yet been developed.

Defining Addiction

- Moral Model
- Self-Medication Model
- Medical/Disease Model
- Spirituality Model
- Impulse-Control Disorder
- Reward Deficiency and Neurophysiological Adaptation
- Genetic Model
- Biomedical Model
- Social Learning Model
- Erroneous Thought Patterns
- Biopsychosocial Model
- Public Health Model

Moral Model

- Defines an “addict” as being weak in character
- Based on the notion that individuals have free choice and are, therefore, responsible for their behaviors
- This model has influenced public policy and the judicial system (e.g., the “war on drugs”)

Self-Medication Model

- Assumption is that people engage in certain behaviors as a means to self-medicate to cope with emotional pain
- Starts as a means to find relief and then eventually leads to addiction
- Proponents assert that this explanation should be considered in parallel with other approaches and not as a comprehensive model

Medical/Disease Model

- Addiction is identified as a disease, rather than a mental disorder or moral failure
- Disease defined as a severely harmful, potentially fatal condition that manifests itself in an irreversible loss of control over use of psychoactive substances
- Although the disease may go into remission, there is no cure
- Since the disease is progressive and often fatal, complete abstinence is the only treatment goal

Spirituality Model

- Assumes that addictive disorders stem from a lack of spirituality; that is, being disconnected from a “Higher Power”
- Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, etc. is based on this model (together with the Medical Model)

Genetic Model

- Research over the past two decades has identified a genetic predisposition in some individuals to alcohol, tobacco, and other substances of abuse
- It is thought that between 40% and 60% of an individual's risk for an addiction may be genetic
- Some genetic researchers now believe different classes of substances may be connected to unique genetic preferences and may help account for the individual's drug of choice

Biomedical Model

- Draws from both biological and behavioral sciences
- Assumes that using drugs repeatedly over time changes brain structure and function in fundamental and long-lasting ways that can persist long after the individual stops using them
- Once the addiction impacts the brain, the client is driven behaviorally to support the demands made by the brain to prevent becoming ill from withdrawal

Social Learning Model

- Social reinforcement causes individuals to model the drug use behaviors of their parents, siblings, and peers
- Bandura's 4 stages of social learning:
 - Attention: conscious cognitive choice to observe the behavior
 - Memory: recalls what he/she has observed from the model (e.g., incredible memories about observing parents gambling)
 - Imitation: repeats the actions of the model
 - Motivation: must have some internal motivation for wanting to carry out the modeled behavior

Types of Drugs

- Alcohol is likely most commonly abused substance
- Inappropriate use of alcohol is particularly prevalent in persons who have sexually offended
- Part of the problem may be that social or recreational use is socially acceptable, which increases access for those who might ultimately engage in excessive use

Types of Substances Abused

Substances subject to abuse are typically classified as:

- Opioids (painkillers), such as codeine, heroin, and methadone
- Depressants, such as barbiturates (anaesthetics) or benzodiazepines (valium)
- Stimulants, such as cocaine and methamphetamine
- Hallucinogens, such as magic mushrooms or LSD
- Inhalants, such as paint, glue, gasoline
- Cannabinoids, such as marijuana, hashish
- Anabolic steroids

Schedule

The Controlled Substances Act in the USA lists drugs by a schedule that indicates the potential for abuse

I. These drugs have high potential for abuse and no currently accepted medical use, including cannabis, heroin, ecstasy

II. These drugs have high potential for abuse, but also have medical uses – amphetamine, cocaine, codeine

III. These drugs have less potential for abuse than I/II and have medical uses – steroids, ketamine

IV. These drugs have low abuse potential and are often used medically – benzodiazepines, tramadol

V. These drugs also have low abuse potential and are often used medically – lacosamide (epilepsy), lyrica (pain)

Characteristics of Addiction

- Regardless of their etiology, addictions generally have three characteristics in common:
 - Compulsive use
 - Loss of control
 - Continued use despite adverse consequences

Compulsive Use

- Three elements:
 - Reinforcement: occurs when the addictive substance or behavior is first engaged; being rewarded with pleasure and/or relief from pain and stress reinforces the user
 - Craving: the body and brain send intense signals that the drug or behavior is needed; ongoing use/behavior alters the chemical balance of the brain; withdrawal may occur when drug withheld or behavior prevented; psychological component to craving
 - Habit: results from deeply ingrained patterns of thought and behavior; addictive behaviors often involve automatic responses
- Sauce-Bérnaise effect does not hold with addicted individuals

Continued Use Despite Adverse Consequences

- Addictive behavior clearly has negative consequences
- Some individuals may not be aware of these consequences, although others around them are OR they may feel that the pleasurable or pain-relieving features of use outweigh the problems

Tolerance

- When a drug is used continually, the body adapts to—and begins to tolerate the drug's pharmacological effects (parallel in behavior)
- As a result, individual needs more and more of the substance/behavior to achieve the same results (intensity and duration of the initial experience)
- Must also use more or engage in the behavior more in order to avoid the physical discomfort and psychological distress that accompany withdrawal

Withdrawal

- When use/behavior is stopped, the individual suffers unpleasant effects that are usually the opposite of those induced by the chemical/behavior
- Because the body has adapted, withdrawal is painful and may be life-threatening (with certain classes of substances; e.g., *delirium tremens* from alcohol withdrawal involves seizures, disorientation, and even death)
- Withdrawal may create the rebound effect: characteristic of the drug produces reverse effects when the effect of the drug has passed

Nonchemical Addictions

- Some have argued that nonchemical addictions are really just obsessive-compulsive disorders
- However, there are no rewards associated with OCD except for reductions in anxiety
- By contrast, addictions are initially extremely pleasant experiences. OCD plagues people with intrusive, unwanted thoughts and is inherently distasteful

Pathological Gambling

- Pathological gambling is an impulse control disorder often grouped with pyromania (fire setting), kleptomania (impulsion to steal), intermittent explosive disorder (inability to control aggression), and trichotillomania (constant pulling of one's hair)
- As far as the brain is concerned, it seems that "a reward is a reward is a reward," whether it comes from a chemical or an experience

Multiple Addictions

- Addictions often occur in constellations
- Polysubstance abuse is more the norm than mono-drug use
- Additionally, people who abuse alcohol or drugs may also have problems in other areas

The Progression of Substance Use

- Progression in consumption or problems
- Often imperceptible to the individual, the substance assumes an ever-more important role
- Use may begin for medical reasons
 - low-dose dependencies (failure to terminate use when it is no longer medically necessary)
 - medically prescribed drugs can be very addictive, and even medical doctors have underestimated this

The Progression of Substance Use

1. Experimentation

- harmless for some, may be an introduction to recreational use for others
- most commonly occurs in preteen and adolescent years, viewed as a normal part of adolescence
- initiated due to curiosity, may be maintained for its mood-altering qualities
- continued use is dependent on a variety of psychological, social, physiological, and spiritual factors

Progression

2. Recreational Drug Use:

- typically social, to enhance pleasurable situations
- involves significant choice and control
- does not display any negative consequences from their use

Progression

3. Substance Abuse

- when recreational use progresses to problematic use
- individual may occasionally experience negative consequences, however because they are intermittent, the individual has difficulty admitting to the problematic use; tend to rationalize or justify the negative consequences
- individual in this stage usually finds the substance to provide a useful purpose beyond a social one (e.g., anxiety-reduction)
 - may not be able to articulate why they continue to use despite the negative consequences (i.e., benefits are not always conscious to the user)

Progression

4. Substance Dependence

- loss of control over use
- mounting problems
- physiological dependence, depending on the substance
- using to avoid withdrawal symptoms (pleasure from use becomes elusive)

Substance abuse as a risk factor

- Substance abuse as a risk factor in violent recidivism can probably be best conceptualized as falling on a continuum from “providing no significant contribution to risk” to a “very high contribution to risk”.
- Interacting factors under consideration include: nature and extent of substance abuse, cognitive functioning, personality characteristics (particularly cluster B personality disorders and psychopathy), peer group, employment, and external supports.

Issues in Managing Core Members with Substance Abuse Issues

- For those core members on supervision, urinalysis and other testing helps monitor abstain conditions
- In the absence of testing, we are reliant on core members to tell us the truth
- Most alcohol and drug abusers don't stop cold turkey – it's often a process of abstinence and relapse, with longer and longer periods (hopefully) between relapses
- Circle volunteers can be hugely helpful in assisting core members in their recovery processes

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Self-Care & Burnout

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/q2tsU8EwMRo>

Why do we do what we do?

- ❖ There is no denying that working with persons with sexual behavior problems is challenging.
- ❖ Some of our core members will be really good at “pushing our buttons”.
- ❖ How do we offset our natural tendencies to be empathic and helpful with our natural tendencies to be angry and upset at what our core members have done?

Why do we keep doing it?

- ❖ To reduce the number of potential victims
- ❖ We believe that core members have a right to appropriate treatment and care
- ❖ We believe that our core members can establish a quality of life as close as possible to that of others who don't offend
 - Lifestyle balance
 - Self-determinism (to the extent safely possible)

Burnout

Burnout involves physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that is attributable to stress

- ❖ Physical – chronic fatigue, weakness, low energy
- ❖ Mental – highly negative attitude toward oneself, work, and life in general
- ❖ Emotional – feeling hopeless, helpless, trapped

Predictors & Mediators of Burnout

Predicting your risk for burnout vs.
resilience:

- ❖ Workplace Risk Factors
- ❖ Individual Risk Factors

Workplace Risk Factors

- ❖ Role ambiguity
- ❖ Role conflict
- ❖ Tangible and intrinsic rewards
- ❖ Workload
- ❖ Recognition that work is valuable
- ❖ Social support

Individual Risk Factors

- ❖ Sense of control
- ❖ Turnover
- ❖ Organizational commitment
- ❖ Perception of fairness
- ❖ Fit between values
- ❖ Coping skills and strategies

Burnout

People are less at risk for burnout when they feel that they have a degree of control over their situation, if they believe they are being fairly treated, and if they and others value the work they do and are committed to it.

Vicarious Trauma

- ❖ Vicarious trauma
- ❖ Compassion fatigue
- ❖ Co-victimization
- ❖ Secondary survivor
- ❖ Emotional contagion
- ❖ Cost of caring

Vicarious Trauma

VT is a human phenomenon:

...when we hold the capacity for empathy, we may experience distress when hearing about troubling things that have happened to others.

Vicarious Trauma

High risk persons are those who:

- ❖ Interview and counsel trauma victims
- ❖ Work with families and victims
- ❖ Work with persons who have abused
 - counselors, health/hospital staff, emergency workers, child protection, corrections, law enforcement, volunteers

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma challenges the core beliefs we hold about ourselves and our relationships, the nature of the world we live in, and our overall meanings and values.

VT is a normal human consequence of second-hand exposure to traumatic material.

Predictors & Mediators of Secondary Traumatic Stress Effects

- ❖ Individual Factors
- ❖ Situational & Environmental Factors

Individual Factors

- ❖ Personal History
 - Personal experiences of trauma, loss, victimization
- ❖ Personality and Defensive Style
- ❖ Coping Style
 - Coping mechanisms
- ❖ Current Life Context
 - private life situation
- ❖ Training and Professional History
- ❖ Personal Therapy

Situational Factors

- ❖ Workload
- ❖ Nature of the work
- ❖ Nature of the clientele
- ❖ Cumulative exposure to trauma material
- ❖ Relationship with co-workers
- ❖ Social and cultural context
- ❖ Supervision

Complex Stress Effects

People who volunteer with individuals at high-risk or high-need regarding sexual violence are functioning within a high-risk stress environment

Core effects:

- ❖ Physical health, anxiety disorders, depression, substance abuse
- ❖ Self-perceptions and beliefs about others
- ❖ Self-esteem and interpersonal problems

Stress & The Body

Stressful experiences can affect our bodies in three ways:

- ❖ Immune System
- ❖ Neuroendocrine system
- ❖ Cardiovascular System

Effects for CoSA Volunteers

- ❖ Höing et al. (2016) have reviewed the effects of volunteering with people who have sexually offended
- ❖ Positive effects were found, in that volunteering improves physical health and mental well-being, personal growth, and citizenship
- ❖ However, being in empathic relationships with persons who have sexually offended can have both positive and negative effects on psychological and social functioning.
 - These are moderated by personal, task, and organizational characteristics.

Mitigation Factors

How well are you taking care of yourself?

- ❖ Self-care in the workplace
- ❖ Self-care in your personal life

Holistic approach

- ❖ Maintaining a balanced lifestyle is central to effective self-care

Balance & Priorities

Remember that being a helpful volunteer requires you to espouse the same values and attitudes we are trying to instill in our core members:

- ❖ Health
- ❖ Households
- ❖ Relationships – Family
- ❖ Relationships – Social
- ❖ Physical activity / Recreation
- ❖ Creative pursuits, interests, hobbies
- ❖ Existential / Spiritual life
- ❖ Work
- ❖ Social and community involvement

Mitigation Factors

- ❖ The more balanced we are across the full range of personal care, the more we are able to cope with the stresses and demands that we will face and, ultimately, be more effective as volunteers.
- ❖ Create opportunities for renewal, simple pleasures, and enjoyment.

Kindergarten

More than 30 years ago, Robert Fulghum published “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten”:

“Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in Kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school. These are the things I learned.”

Kindergarten

- ❖ Share everything.
- ❖ Play fair.
- ❖ Don't hit people.
- ❖ Put things back where you found them.
- ❖ Clean up your own mess.
- ❖ Don't take things that aren't yours.
- ❖ Say sorry when you hurt somebody.

Kindergarten

- ❖ Wash your hands before you eat.
- ❖ Flush.
- ❖ Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
- ❖ Live a balanced life.
- ❖ Take a nap every afternoon.
- ❖ When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

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