Finding Common Ground: Juvenile Sex Offender Policy & Supporting Survivors in Ohio

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Workshop Objectives

• Learn about how OAESV and OPD identified common ground and brought together a group of unlikely allies to educate policymakers on child sexual assault.

• Learn about the Ohio policy resource guide and the importance of a review process and messaging strategy for successful roll-out

• Identify two lessons learned that they can apply to starting a similar workgroup in their state or local community
How Did We Get Here?
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http://www.oaesv.org/standup/
PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR
DOING SOMETHING GOOD FOR OTHER PEOPLE OR SOCIETY
Fact

Arrests for sexual offenses against minors

- Adult: 64%
- Juvenile: 36%

OJJDP ‘09
JSORN

- Adam Walsh Act
  - Signed into law in July 2006
  - Replaced Jacob Wetterling Act
  - Ohio one of first to attempt to comply
Ohio Legislation

- Not based upon what we know about JSOs
  - Research on recidivism, treatment, protective factors
  - Impact of implementation on community safety, families, victims, offender
  - Did not recognize differences between juveniles and adults who sexually offend
The Basics

Who Must Register?
- All youth 16 or 17 at time of offense
- All youth 14-17 with a prior adjudication
- 14-17 year old serious youthful offenders who are found delinquent of one of six enumerated offenses

Who Might Register?
- First time 14 and 15 year old offenders
  - Court must consider factors in R.C. 2152.83(D) prior

Who Will Not Register?
- Youth who were under 14 at time of offense
What we know about registration

- Intent = public safety
- Research = does not reduce sexual recidivism
- Research = iatrogenic effect (more harm)
Familial impact

- Anecdotal
- Between 25-31% of victims are family members
- 56-64% are acquaintances *
- Appropriate treatment may not be given=no Sex offense =no registration=impact on treatment availability or motivation
Cases & Collaboration

- Child Protective Services
- Sexting
- Steubenville
Who needs to be at the table

- Victim’s advocates
- Prosecutors
- Public Defenders
- Expert in juvenile sexual offender research
Issues with collaboration

- Misconceptions about each entity’s beliefs about juvenile sexual offender work
GOALS

Reasoned approach to registration & legislation

Incorporate research in one place

Victim-centered language

Recognition of differences in offenders and offenses
Challenges

• Recognition of emotional response to sexual offending
• Not minimizing sexual offenses
• Replacing myths with facts
• Providing research in a way that is not overwhelming
• Case examples addressing diversity of juvenile sexual offending
• Suggestions in considering legislation without legislating
• Distribution of information
What to Include

Knowing this----what do you think would need to be included?
Differences between juveniles and adults with sexual aggression

- Patterns of sexual interest and arousal
- Perpetration behaviors are less consistent and sophisticated
- Situational and opportunity factors
- Adolescent sexual abusers who have themselves been the victims of sexual abuse are far closer in time to their own abuse
• Adolescents have less developed sexual knowledge.
• Adolescents live in a world with different values, beliefs and expectations.
• The role of the family is more critical
• Adolescents experience and expect a greater degree of external control over their behaviors/interactions.
• More open and used to education and the acquisition of new skills.
• Less research on juvenile offenders
Each Client Differs

In areas of risk and protective factors

Reasons for behaviors

Family Response/Issues

Goals
Recidivism
5 year follow-up

- 2.75-7%
20 year follow up
(Treatment received)

- 9% sexual recidivism
Recommendations

• Recognize the individuality of both the victim and the offender, and **allow each to access the treatment and services** most likely to repair the harm suffered and prevent future abuse.

• **Decriminalize normative child and adolescent sexual behavior**, focusing instead on the assessment and treatment of problematic behaviors.

• Scale back Ohio’s ineffective, costly juvenile sex offender registry and **redirect financial savings to creating a statewide network of research-supported education, prevention, and treatment services for victims and offenders.**
Recommendations

• Acknowledge that child sexual abuse affects more than just the offender and the victim, and ensure access to developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed treatment, counseling, appropriate family reunification and supervision, and other supportive services for each child’s circumstances.

• Move away from Ohio’s current focus on punitive responses to sexual offending after the fact and dedicate resources to preventing sexual violence from ever occurring.
Messaging & Roll-Out

- Discussions & input from rape crisis centers
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month & Forum
- Distributed to Ohio Policy Makers
- Focus on Prevention
Starting a workgroup in your community

- What challenges have you run into or do you anticipate?
- What successes can you share?
Questions?

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