

Information Sheet: What you need to know about Sex Offenders and Sheltering during a Disaster in Colorado

Sexual violence can be mentally, physically and emotionally traumatic. After a disaster, people are more vulnerable to sexual victimization. This harm can be made worse by the added trauma of living through a disaster.

What do we know about sexual violence and disasters?

Basic resources that can protect people from sexual violence often are not available after a disaster. Resources that are most often compromised include: safe housing, transportation, access to information, supportive friends and family, police protection, communication and health care.

- Police and ambulances may be less able to respond to sexual violence after a disaster because they are busy with other disaster response efforts.
- Disasters can often cause harm to groups that are already oppressed. People living in poverty, children, people with disabilities and elders often have less protection from sexual violence.
- Living with many stressed people in crowded conditions can increase the likelihood that sexual violence will occur.
- Personal stressors such as financial instability, lack of housing, employment problems and attaining services can increase the risk of sexual re-offense behavior. These stressors increase risk for the first-time perpetration of sexually abusive behaviors as well. In the event of a disaster; these stressors increase considerably (Klein, 2008).
- During and following a disaster, when it is likely that there is an increase in the perpetration of sexual assaults, it appears that reporting of sexual assaults from victims decreases even more than during times when conditions for reporting these crimes are optimal (Hanson et al. , 1999).

Facts about sex offenders

Sexual Abuse is:(CSOM, 2008):

- Unwanted sexual contact;
- Sexual contact perpetrated by an individual who is significantly older than the victim.
- Sex crimes can involve physical contact (unwanted sexual touching) or non-physical contact such as exposing behavior.
- Sexual Assault: Any actor who knowingly inflicts sexual intrusion or sexual penetration on a victim §18-3-402, C.R.S.

Who Are Sex Offenders?

There is no such thing as a “typical” sex offender. Sex offenders can:

- Be male or female, young or old
- Have different levels of education
- Be married or single
- May have no prior record of criminal or sexual criminal history.
- Many offenders commit multiple crimes against multiple types of victims with whom they have varying types of relationships (adults, children, male, female, known and unknown). This behavior is known as "crossover." Reasons for offending and types of treatment required for behavioral change vary, along with the risks they pose to the community (English et al, 2000; Abel and Rouleau, 1990).

Who are offenders likely to target?

Most sexual offenses are committed by someone the victim knows either a family member, friend, intimate partner, or acquaintance. About 27% of offenders are strangers (CSOM, 2008).

How Common Are Sex Crimes?

Sex crimes are unfortunately fairly common in the United States. It is estimated that one in every five girls and one in every seven boys are sexually abused by the time they reach adulthood. One in six adult women and one in 33 adult men experience an attempted or completed sexual assault, (CSOM, 2008).

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How many arrests occur for sex offenses?

Sex offenses represent under 1% of all arrests. In 2004, the last year for which official report data were available, there were 26,066 arrests for forcible rape and 90,913 arrests for other sex offenses in the United States. Adults account for about 80% of arrests; juveniles for 20%. Males account for approximately 95% of arrests (CSOM, 2008).

How often do sex offenders recidivate?

About 12%-24% of sex offenders will recidivate. When they do commit another crime, it is more often not sexual or violent. Research suggests that sexual deviancy and antisocial orientation are major predictors of sexual recidivism for both adult sexual offenders and juveniles who commit sexual offenses. Offenders who exhibit these behaviors are more likely to recidivate than others (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005).

What happens to sex offenders under court supervision?

- The courts impose different sentences depending on the offender, the facts of the case, victim input and Colorado law. Some offenders are sentenced to prison or jail, while others receive community supervision (probation). Those offenders who have served their Department of Corrections Sentence and are eligible may receive a period of parole to the community.
- Sex offenders who are supervised through probation are under the purview of the Colorado Judicial Branch and those on parole are under the purview of the Colorado Department of Corrections or the Division of Youth Corrections. Both probation and parole offenders are subject to treatment, polygraphs and other special requirements set forth by their probation or parole officer or client manager and the court.

Sex offenders sentenced to probation:

It is the intent of the State Court Administrator's Office, Division of Probation Services and all probation districts to promote consistent and effective supervision of those who commit sexual offenses while fostering a commitment to restorative justice for the victim, the community and the offender.

- Approximately 65% of convicted sex offenders are supervised by probation in the community.
- As of January, 2012 there were 2,532 adult sex offenders and 450 juveniles under supervision.

Sex offenders in the Colorado Department of Corrections or on parole (Heil and Geist)

- Corrections supervises approximately 6700 sex offenders as of January 2012. Of these, approximately 1500 are being supervised in the community on parole or in community corrections.

Colorado Sex Offender Registration Requirements

Convicted Sex Offenders must register during business hours within 5 business days of being released into the community or receiving this notice. If released from the Department of Corrections with no supervision, they must register the next business day. Thereafter, they must re-register annually within five business days before or after their birthday. They must register quarterly (every 3 months) for the remainder of their natural life if they have been found to be a Sexually Violent Predator or its equivalent in another state or jurisdiction, if they were convicted as an adult in Colorado of any of the below listed offenses, or if they were convicted in another state or jurisdiction of an offense that requires quarterly registration in that state or jurisdiction, or would require quarterly registration in Colorado.

- If they move, they must register with the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction to which they move within 5 business days after moving. They must notify the local law enforcement agency where they live if they change residences within that agency's jurisdiction or establish additional residences in that jurisdiction.
- They must re-register within 5 business days of a legal name change.
- They must register the address at which a vehicle, trailer or motor home is located if the vehicle, trailer or motor home is their residence.

As of November 2011, there were 14,812 registered sex offenders in Colorado (CBI).

Recommendations for Shelters in Disasters

- Shelters should ensure the availability of adequate security personnel which may include trained law enforcement.
- Shelters should partner with other agencies and collaborate with law enforcement, Behavioral Health and mental health professionals to coordinate their services within the shelter. Designated safe zones may be added within the shelter.
- Shelters should utilize the American Red Cross Shelter Registration Form or a similar type of form to screen sex offenders and consult with law enforcement to determine their level of security.
- Shelters should maintain ongoing communication with law enforcement for those offenders not under supervision (probation or parole). Shelter personnel should encourage the offender to contact their probation or parole officer. Failure of the client to contact their probation or parole officer could result in a technical violation of their community supervision.
- Shelters should have all evacuees register as they enter the shelter and shelters should limit the number of evacuees so the population is manageable to ensure a safe environment; shelters should not exceed more than 1,000 people.
- Perpetrators prey on vulnerable populations and disasters can create an environment that makes it easier to commit sexual assault. Keep in mind that most sexual offenders are not identified. Having a general awareness and creating a safe environment for everyone in the shelter is recommended.
- Shelters should have residents relinquish all drugs, alcohol and weapons upon registration at the shelter.
- Many sex offenders are prohibited from having contact with children. Shelters should have supervised sex offenders report if they are prohibited from having contact with children.
- Local law enforcement should provide a list of registered sex offenders for long term shelters.
- Shelters should have registered sex offenders report their status and consider having them check in with security or shelter staff at regular intervals throughout their stay. Those entering the shelter without valid identification may require further screening.
- Shelters should work with law enforcement to seek alternative locations for sex offenders to go if it is not appropriate for them to remain at the shelter (supervising agencies).
- Shelters should create separate sleep and habitation areas for females, males and families.
- Shelters should create designated areas for children to play that provide safe activities; increase the areas supervision and security; have trained staff screen the individuals who will supervise these areas.
- Parents should receive support and instructions concerning their role in the care and supervision for their children while in the shelter.
- Shelters should provide an orientation session with regular updates to educate evacuees about sexual assault; and safety measures to take to keep themselves and others safe.
- It is recommended that shelter staff have training in the area of sexual violence prevention.

A disaster is any event that causes damage, disruption, brings harm to humans, or breaks down health or health services in such a way that an extraordinary response is needed from those outside the disaster area. This includes natural disasters and human generated disasters.

Helpful Links:

American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/>

American Red Cross, Colorado Chapters: <http://www.denver-redcross.org/index.asp?IDCapitulo=Q4Q26NY21N>

American Red Cross, Pikes Peak Chapter: <http://www.denver-redcross.org/general.asp?SN=199&OP=6890&IDCapitulo=q4q26ny21n>

Colorado Bureau of Investigation convicted sex offender site: <http://sor.state.co.us/>

Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault: <http://www.ccasa.org/>

Colorado Sex Offender Management Board: http://dcj.state.co.us/odvsom/sex_offender/

Colorado Department of Corrections: <http://www.doc.state.co.us/>

Colorado Judicial Branch: <http://www.courts.state.co.us/>

References:

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