

## **POSITION STATEMENT RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

The Oklahoma Coalition for Sex Offender Management (OKCSOM) is concerned about our state's law regarding residency restrictions for sex offenders. Our position is that the management of community based sex offenders is enhanced only when it is based on evidenced based practices.

No viable research examines the efficacy of residence restrictions. However, research does identify unintended consequences. According to a Florida study involving sex offenders on probation, one quarter relocated because of that state's law. Nearly half reported they could not reside with family. Fifty-seven percent reported less available housing, leading to isolation and stress. In an Indiana study, more than twenty five percent of sex offenders could not return home after prison. Thirty-eight percent reported affordable housing was less available, forcing them to live away from employment, social services and treatment. Six months after the initiation of Iowa's residency restrictions, thousands of sex offenders became homeless or transient. Registered offenders vanished, rendering the registry inaccurate. Iowa prosecutors and victim advocates have denounced residency restrictions, believing they create more problems than they solve.

Residency restrictions are designed to prevent predatory sex offenders from reoffending. However, the Bureau of Justice reports that 93% of children molested are done so by a relative or someone the child knows. About 40% of offenses occur in the victims' homes; 20% occur in the homes of friends or relatives.

Residency restrictions disrupt offender stability and often isolate sex offenders from their support systems. These restrictions remove offenders from employment, housing and transportation, resulting in stressors which are known to increase the risk for recidivism. Stable employment and housing are essential for offenders to successfully transition into the community.

OKCSOM believes that Oklahoma should consider alternatives to residency restrictions including limiting offender access to places where they can easily engage children and providing incentives to offenders who successfully complete supervision and treatment as well as demonstrate an offense-free lifestyle for extended periods of time. Current respected research finds that 75% of sex offenders are not rearrested for a sexual offense over a fifteen year period. If residency restrictions are maintained, these interventions should only be used on offenders whose risk has been assessed by best practice assessment procedures that place them at a high risk for reoffense.

Understandably, the public is unsympathetic to the problems of sex offenders. Some sex offenders pose serious threats and we must protect our communities from sexual violence. However, our laws should not contribute to the risk of reoffense. OKCSOM encourages all Oklahomans to protect our children and encourage the Legislature to pass laws that truly enhance their safety.