



# DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## SEXUALLY VIOLENT PREDATOR COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION BULLETIN

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### Personal Safety Tips

**Please be aware that there are no perfect protection strategies. There is no way to predict all possible situations. These tips are intended to reduce, not eliminate the risk of assault.**

- The primary responsibility for any sexual assault rests with the offender and not the victim. Unfortunately, you can take all reasonable measures to reduce your risk and still be assaulted.
- Knowledge is power. Though many sex offenders are NOT known to law enforcement, you can educate yourself about those known offenders who reside in the City and County of Denver by contacting the Denver Police Department Identification Bureau at 720-913-6756.
- Remember that most sexual assaults are committed by someone that the victim knows. The stranger does not pose the highest risk to you. Up to 90% of sex offenders are known to their victims and include relatives, friends and authority figures. If you feel uncomfortable in someone's presence, trust your feelings and take steps to distance yourself from him or her. Don't be afraid to make a scene if necessary. Tell someone!
- Societal myths are beliefs that contribute to the continuation of sexual assault and abuse. Understand the current rape myths and help debunk these myths for others.
- Avoid high-risk situations. Be observant and aware of your surroundings. Avoid poorly lit areas where an attacker might hide. Identify safe people in your neighborhood that you or your children can go to if you need help. Be thoughtful and use good judgment in choosing your friends and partners. Be careful of your use of alcohol and drugs; you are more vulnerable to attack if you are intoxicated. Do not leave your food or drink unattended at a party or in a public place. Don't be embarrassed to use security staff at work or when shopping, to walk you to your car. Do not pick up hitchhikers or stop to help a stranger in a stalled vehicle; use a phone in a safe location to call for help. Be cautious about making personal contact with those you meet on the Internet or in other similar environments.
- Do not harass the offender. The purpose behind community notification is to reduce the chances of future victimization of persons by this offender. The information presented through this notification should assist you and your family in avoiding situations that allow easy victimization. Initiating contact with the Sexually Violent Predator can increase the risk of you or your family being victimized or may drive the offender underground, placing others at greater risk.

#### WHAT CAN I TELL MY CHILDREN?

- **Avoid scary details.** You know more than your child needs to know. Use language that is honest and age-appropriate (e.g. "there are people who do bad things to children...") Include general information, as this may protect them from others who would try to harm them as well. If your child is likely to have contact with the Sexually Violent Predator or other registered sex offenders you should show your child the sex offender's photo. Instruct them to avoid contact with the offender and encourage them to tell you if he or she initiates contact. In general all supervised sex offenders are prohibited from initiating any contact with children, and any contact should be reported to the supervising officer.
- **Teach your child.** DON'T take rides from strangers; DON'T harass or visit any sex offender's home or yard. DO tell a safe adult if anyone acts inappropriately toward them (e.g. creepy, too friendly, threatening, offering gifts in a secret way, or touching them); DO RUN, SCREAM and GET AWAY if someone is bothering them; DON'T keep secrets; DON'T assist strangers; DON'T go places alone; DO ask questions and DO talk about any uncomfortable feelings or interactions.
- **Make it a habit to LISTEN to your children and to believe them.** If a child feels listened to and believed about small everyday things, they are more likely to share the big scary things with you. Be sensitive to changes in your child's behavior. Pay attention to your child's feelings and thoughts.
- **Role-play safety with your child.** Act out scenarios of various dangerous situations and teach them how to respond (e.g. home alone and someone comes to the door; separated from Mom in the toy store and a man comes up to talk to them; or chatting on the Internet and they are asked for their home address).

## SEX OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

- Most 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.
- Sex offenders rarely commit just one type of offense. Many offenders have NO criminal history or sex crime history of any kind.
- There is no such thing as a “typical” sex offender, however all tend to be manipulative, deceptive, and secretive. Sex offenders come from all backgrounds, ages, income levels and professions.
- The majority of offenses are committed by someone the victim knows.
- Sexual deviancy often begins in mid to late adolescence.
- Sex offenders do not usually commit their crimes impulsively. They usually employ careful planning and preliminary steps that, if interrupted, can prevent an actual crime.
- The vast majority of sex offenders are male; only 20% of child sex offenses are committed by women.

## FACTS AND STATISTICS ABOUT SEX OFFENDING

- In 1994, there were an estimated 234,000 convicted sex offenders in the United States.
- There are approximately 3,500 sex offenders in the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC), this number includes 35 sex offenders on Lifetime Supervision.
- There are approximately 350 sex offenders on parole in Colorado, which accounts for approximately 8% of DOC population.
- There are approximately 2,200 sex offenders on probation in Colorado. This figure includes 27 sex offenders on Lifetime Supervision.
- Each year, approximately 65% of persons convicted of sex offenses are placed on probation, 35% in prison and a small percentage go to community corrections programs.
- Most victims of sexual assault do not become sex offenders.
- In the first year of the Community Notification Program, 16 Sexually Violent Predators were identified and 15 were sentenced to DOC.
- Offenders may be caught for one type of sex offense, and be at a high risk for another type.
- Crime of conviction is only one indicator of risk. Risk assessment always includes consideration of multiple factors.
- The majority of sex offenders are not caught or detected.
- Less than 16% of sexual assaults are ever reported to law enforcement.
- 1998 Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is an ongoing telephone survey which showed:
  - ✓ 1 in 150 women and 1 in 830 men in Colorado had experienced a completed or attempted sexual assault in the past 12 months;
  - ✓ Approximately 16% of these assaults were reported to police;
  - ✓ 1 in 4 women and 1 in 17 men in Colorado had experienced a completed or attempted sexual assault in their lifetime.

## IMPACT ON VICTIMS OF SEX OFFENSES

- Overwhelming experiences such as sexual assault or abuse create significant stress responses.
- There are many different responses to trauma that victims of sexual assault can exhibit. Generally, people respond to trauma in one of two ways, **expressed** and/or **controlled**. The same person may experience both reactions at different times:
  - ✓ Victims experiencing the expressed response may be crying, visibly frightened or angry. Otherwise very emotional. They may talk about what happened to them; sometimes over and over again. They may attempt to process the violation and pain they have experienced by expressing extreme fear or anger. Another reaction may be to attempt to protect themselves against further harm by keeping others at a distance either verbally or physically. These are normal protective behaviors in response to abnormal life events.
  - ✓ Victims experiencing the controlled response tend to be very quiet and tense. It may be a tremendous effort to answer questions or to even give simple one-word answers. They are responding to trauma by conserving their energy and pulling inward. They may experience feelings of numbness or extreme emotions of terror or anger inside, but not exhibiting it on the outside. It may appear they are not being cooperative with helpers around them, however, they are simply coping with the trauma the best way they know how.
  - ✓ *Either reaction or a combination of both reactions is normal. One reaction is not more “credible” than the other!*
- Sexual trauma inflicted by a known perpetrator tends to create a more difficult recovery than sexual trauma inflicted by a stranger. The victim must also deal with betrayal by someone they have formerly trusted.
- Sexual trauma can create post-traumatic stress disorder or other clinical reactions. Nearly 1/3 of all rape victims develop rape-related PTSD according to the National Center for Victims of Crime.

- Long term damage to the victim may take the form of some or all of the following symptoms: depression, chronic anxiety, feeling of dissociation (not feeling connected to oneself), flashbacks to the traumatic event, avoidance of anything that reminds them of the traumatic event, intrusive thoughts, relationship disruptions such as increased conflict or divorce, loss or diminishment of sexual interest or responsiveness, loss of concentration, heightened fears, chronic sleeping or eating problems, exaggerated startle response, irritability, suicidal thoughts, a diminished interest in living and an inability to enjoy previously enjoyed life activities.
- Male victims of sexual assault and abuse are more likely to develop anti-social disorders and substance abuse problems.
- Female victims are more likely to develop depression and substance abuse problems.
- The above-mentioned responses are minimized and recovery is enhanced when a victim is believed and supported and has access to victim advocacy and treatment services.
- Many societal myths continue to support the act of rape. The most common myths (or sociocultural misconceptions) about rape are:
  - ✓ ***She asked for it.*** No woman asks to be raped or sexually assaulted. The victim's behavior or appearance is not the issue in question. Consent is the issue.
  - ✓ ***It can't happen to me.*** Anyone is a potential victim, irrespective of age, race, educational background or income level.
  - ✓ ***The primary motive for rape is sex.*** Power, anger and control are the motives for rape, not sex.
  - ✓ ***Rape occurs only among strangers.*** Only 22% of rape cases involve strangers. The rest, 78% are committed by individuals the victim knows well – a spouse, father, boyfriend, relative, friend or neighbor.
  - ✓ ***Rape does not happen in marriages.*** One aspect of domestic violence in marital rape. When a spouse is forced or coerced into having sex, it is rape.
  - ✓ ***No woman can be forced to have sex against her will.*** A woman can be coerced by physical force or threat of injury or death. Almost half of all rape victims fear serious injury or death during a rape.
  - ✓ ***Most rape victims suffer visible physical injuries during an attack.*** The fact is that over two-thirds of rape victims fearing injury or death do not resist an attack and, hence, do not sustain any bruises, marks or other visible injuries.
- A woman who says "no" usually means "yes". Non-consensual sex is rape.
- It is rare that an individual files a false report of rape or abuse. In fact, it is estimated that less than 16% of all sexual assaults are ever reported. Reporting an assault can be humiliating and difficult.

## Community Sex Offender Management

- Most convicted sex offenders in Colorado are subject to the supervision of a criminal justice agency, either probation, parole or community corrections.
- Colorado Statute and the Sex Offender Management Board state that sex offenders are dangerous, in recognition of the harm they cause and their risk to re-offend. They also indicate that sexual offending is a behavioral disorder which cannot be "cured".
- According to the Sex Offender Management Board, Community safety is paramount and comes before the needs of the offender. Community safety means that the primary goal is to prevent the offender from victimizing any other person.
- While sex offenders cannot be cured, it is believed that some can be managed. The combination of comprehensive treatment and carefully structured and monitored behavioral supervision conditions may assist some sex offenders to develop internal controls for their behaviors.
- In Colorado, the system used to manage sex offenders who are placed in the community is called the Containment Approach. In order to best protect the public, sex offenders are never managed by an individual person, rather they are managed by community supervision teams, consisting of supervising criminal justice officers (probation, parole officer or community corrections), polygraph examiners and treatment providers. Supervision officers set conditions for the offender, monitor their behavior and can impose sanctions for infractions. Treatment providers gather information about the offender, assist with monitoring and administer a long-term comprehensive set of planned therapeutic interventions designed to change sexually abusive thoughts and behaviors. The polygraph examiner assist in gathering a full and accurate history of the offender's behavior and monitors current compliance with conditions and risk behaviors.
- Sex offenders must waive confidentiality for evaluation, treatment, supervision and case management purposes. All members of the team managing and treating each offender must have access to the same relevant information. Sex offenses are committed in secret, and all forms of secrecy potentially undermine the rehabilitation of sex offenders and threaten public safety. This approach has been identified through research to be the best way to manage adult convicted sex offenders in the community.
- Successful containment, treatment and management of sex offenders is enhanced by the involvement of family, friends, employers, and others who have influence in sex offenders' lives, when these people are willing to support the conditions and requirements of the criminal justice system.
- Assignment to community supervision is a privilege, and sex offenders must be completely accountable for their behaviors. They must agree to intensive and sometimes intrusive accountability measures which enable them to remain in the community rather than in prison. They must learn to be accountable to maintain the privilege of remaining under community supervision.