

BALANCING RISK AND RECOVERY

Circles of Support & Accountability Comes Home

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Healthcare Hamilton
McMaster University

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Circles of Support & Accountability

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● Core member ★ Volunteers ★ Professionals

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Sexual Assault is a Community Issue

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- ❖ The community lives in fear of sexual offenders and responses to dealing with this fear are varied throughout history.
- ❖ At the end of the day, reduced recidivism is everyone's business—offender, victim and community.

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Stakeholders

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- ❖ victims
- ❖ citizens
- ❖ law enforcement
- ❖ legal and correctional personnel
- ❖ mental health personnel
- ❖ the media
- ❖ offenders

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Today's Situation

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- ❖ Upon release, many sexual offenders are subject to public notification, vilification and, sometimes, vigilantism.
- ❖ As a result, some are eventually driven out of one community into another and, often, go "underground".

This does not help.

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An Untenable Situation


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- ❖ Many released sexual offenders receive little or no support or encouragement to get help and live safe.
- ❖ The community and *potential victims* have few real safeguards.



Stakeholders



- ❖ victims
- ❖ citizens
- ❖ law enforcement
- ❖ legal and correctional personnel
- ❖ mental health personnel
- ❖ the media
- ❖ offenders

Consider this...

*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.”






The “Tokyo Rules”

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

“Public participation should be regarded as an opportunity for members of the community to contribute to the protection of their society.”

(Rule 17.2)






The “Tokyo Rules”

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

“There should, therefore, be governmental or private agencies capable of lending the released prisoner efficient aftercare directed towards **lessening of prejudice against him** and towards his social rehabilitation.”

(Rule 64, emphasis added)






The “Tokyo Rules”

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners


“With the participation and help of the community and social institutions, and with due regard to the interest of the victims, favourable conditions shall be created for the reintegration of the ex-prisoner into society under the best possible conditions.”

(Principle 10)

Birth of Circles

When all the mechanisms for public safety in a society fail to protect the public or are found inadequate, then it is the people themselves who must act to protect themselves and their most vulnerable members.



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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.

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Goal

To promote successful integration of released men with the community by providing offenders with support, advocacy, and a way to be meaningfully *accountable* in exchange for living *safely* in the community.

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Who are we talking about?

- ❖ men released after having completed their entire sentence (WED offenders—max-ed out)
- ❖ judged to be at high risk to re-offend
- ❖ have no pro-social support in the community
- ❖ are likely to garner media attention

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Volunteer Recruitment and Training

- ❖ Volunteers are screened and familiarized with CoSA principles and practices before they are placed in a Circle
- ❖ Training is provided on a wide range of topics, including
 - overview of the criminal justice system
 - restorative justice
 - the circle model
 - human sexuality and sexual deviance
 - risk assessment
 - boundaries and borders
 - crisis response and conflict resolution
 - collaboration with professionals
 - group and Circle dynamics
 - closing a Circle

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Why Do Circles Work?

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Effective Programs

Based on meta-analytic research, Don Andrews and his colleagues have suggested principles of effective correctional interventions:

- ❖ risk
- ❖ need
- ❖ responsivity
- ❖ professional discretion

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Why do Circles Work?

Offender Social Support

Released sexual offenders who have positive, pro-social support in their community are at less risk of re-offending than those who have no such support, or whose supports are anti-social in nature.

(Hanson and Harris, 1999)

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The Shadow Cast by Formal Justice

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.

Nils Christie (1977). Conflicts as Property. *British Journal of Criminology*.

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The Work of CoSA Flows from Its Vision

The "work" of Circles of Support and Accountability is a purposeful engagement in dialogue with local communities and their institutions.

*This engagement taps a community's innate capacity to preserve order to make peace, begin healing, and to **reclaim the conflict.***

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Practically Speaking . . .



Building a CoSA **IS** to build community

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Formal evaluation

Two part undertaking:

- ❖ **Process Evaluation**
 - data regarding impact of Circles on participants, their families and, most importantly, the community-at-large
 - evaluate the confidence levels of the professional community
- ❖ **Quantitative Evaluation**
 - recidivism rates vs. control



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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

Matching Criteria



- ❖ Detained until WED and released to same general jurisdiction
 - *de facto* risk assessment (NPB detention)
- ❖ Sex offender
- ❖ Date of Release
- ❖ GSIR Score
- ❖ Groups are not different on treatment history

Outcome - Recidivism data Ontario Pilot Sample

	Circles (60)	Control (60)
M(SD) age	47.47 (12.27)	43.62 (10.84)
M(SD) STATIC-99	5.60 (2.22)	5.00 (1.96)
M(SD) RRASOR*	3.18 (1.65)	2.12 (1.31)
M(range-mos) follow-up	54.67 (3-123)	52.47 (3-124)
M(mos) until 1 st failure	22.10	18.54
Recidivism		
Sexual*	5.00% (3)	16.67% (10)
Expected sexual	28.33% (17)**	26.45% (16)
Violent*	15.00% (9)	35.00% (21)
General †	28.33% (17)	43.44% (26)
Dispositions	38	49


* p < .05 ** p < .01 † p < .10

Outcome - Recidivism data National Replication Sample

	Circles (47)	Control (47)
M(SD) age	43.18 (9.55)	43.52 (8.66)
M(SD) STATIC-99**	5.00 (2.14)	6.11 (1.52)
M(SD) RRASOR	2.72 (1.50)	2.74 (1.36)
M(range-mos) follow-up	32.53 (6-84)	35.74 (6-95)
M(mos/#) until 1 st failure*	23.92 (5)	50.73 (18)
Recidivism (convictions + charges)		
Sexual**	2.13% (1)	12.77% (6)
Violent**	8.51% (4)	31.91% (15)
General**	10.64% (5)	38.30% (18)
# of charges**	17	76

* p < .05 ** p < .01 † p < .10





A growing concern...

The Canadian COSA model has garnered considerable international attention.

Circles projects exist in ...


- ❖ England, Ireland, and Scotland
- ❖ California, Minnesota, Colorado, Washington, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, with more on the way
- ❖ All Canadian provinces
- ❖ Interest generated in Latvia, Netherlands, New Zealand, and other international jurisdictions

Closing Thoughts

Research has clearly shown that a collaborative approach which includes representation from all stakeholders can assist considerably in enhancing public safety and offender accountability. Working together, we can manage the risk.

*Teamwork is the key,
and the community has an integral role
to play in public safety!!*





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