

# Sex Offender Court



**ALLEGHENY COUNTY**

**FIFTH DISTRICT  
COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

# Presenters



**The Honorable Jill E. Rangos**  
*Judge, Court of Common Pleas  
Fifth District Pennsylvania*

**Alison Hall**  
*Executive Director  
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape*

**Jasmine A. Rivera**  
*Special Services Unit Supervisor  
Allegheny County Adult Probation Department*

# TRUE or False



1. Megan's Law sex offenders cannot live near schools or playgrounds?
2. Megan's Law offenders are pedophiles?
3. Treatment professionals, victim services professionals all have different interest?
4. The Courts are informed about evidence based best practices when dealing with the sex offender population?

# 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District



- Allegheny County- population - 1.3 million  
includes City of Pittsburgh & suburban areas
- County Jail Capacity: 2,850
- 15 Criminal Court Judges includes 2 SOC judges
- 49 Municipal Courts throughout the county

# SOC Mission Statement



The mission of the **Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania Sex Offender Court** is to promote justice by providing a collaborative approach toward improving outcomes through increased offender accountability, reduced recidivism, and enhanced community safety.

The Sex Offender Court will provide a forum for the prompt and impartial resolution of cases, protect the rights of victims and defendants, and facilitate the use of best practices in the assessment, treatment and compliance of sex offenders.

# Sex Offender Management Multi-disciplinary Team



- Victim Service Providers
- Judiciary
- District Attorney
- Public Defenders
- Probation
- Treatment Providers
- Law Enforcement
- Court Administration
- CYF
- CAC's



# Key questions MDT asked



1. Who should be involved in sex offender management?
2. How should we approach this work – Identify gaps being able to look internally and externally
3. How do we improve sex offender management?



# Core Components Of Allegheny County Sex Offender Court

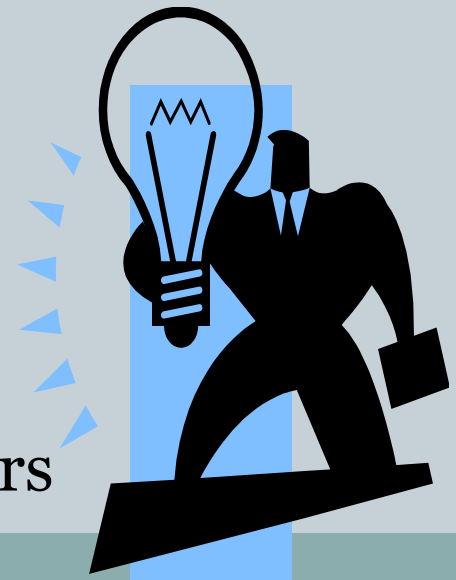
- Keeping Victims Informed
- Charge specific, case identification
- Scheduling Cases Promptly
- Dedicated and trained Judges
- Continuous judicial monitoring – review hearings
- Convene regular meetings with criminal justice agencies and service providers
- Providing court personnel and partners with education & training



# Benefits From Collaboration



- Improved systems' response for victims
- Funded pop-up polygraphs
- Specialized Training for multidisciplinary team
- Special Conditions form
- Informed Decision Making
- Strong Relationships between MDT members



# Examples Of Special Conditions



- SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT
  - NO CONTACT WITH MINORS
  - NO ALCOHOL
  - NO INTERNET ACCESS DEVICES
  - NO SEXUALLY STIMULATING MATERIAL
  - NO UNSUPERVISED CONTACT WITH MINORS – IF OFFENDER HAS OWN CHILDREN
- 
- SEE HANDOUT FOR A COMPLETE LIST

# Case Identification



- All original offenses by an offender that requires to register for Megan's Law
- Charges added under Adam Walsh Act are left to the discretion of the SOC judges



(see handout)

# Benefits Of Specialized Court

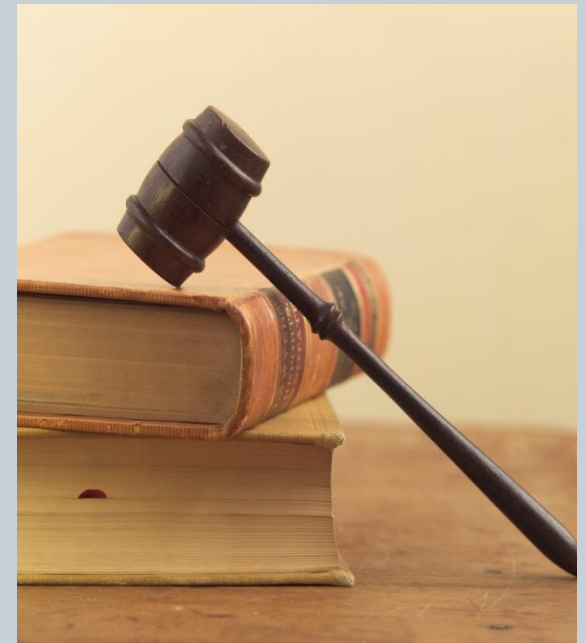


- Imposing special conditions on offenders
- Monitoring of mandated sex offender treatment
- Accepted use of polygraph as a treatment/maintenance tool
- Improved and direct relationship between specialized probation/parole officers and court
- Quick judicial response to violations and high risk behaviors
- Court mandates treatment only to providers approved by the PA Sex Offender Assessment Board (SOAB).

# Benefit Of Sex Offender Court Docket



- Charge specific - not optional
- Two Specialized Judges
- Swift court process/calendar
- Continual judicial monitoring



\*Judicial Monitoring - most powerful tool in the sex offender court model

# True or False



1. Megan's Law offenders cannot live with children?
2. Megan's Law offenders cannot enter schools or daycares?
3. Megan's Law offenders are at a high risk to re-offend?
4. Child Pornography offenders cannot use computers?

# Allegheny County Probation Department



- Cases Supervised : 25,697
- Probation Officers: 130
- Sex Offender Probation Officers: 4 Officers/317 supervised/ only 177 are SOC
- Sex Offenders Supervised: Under 2%



# Historic Approach To Supervision Lacked

- Understanding of sex offender behavior
- Consistency in sentencing
- Specified Docket
- Designated Judges
- Specialized Supervision
- Clarity of goals
- Specialized Unit
- Special conditions
- Informed decision making
- Interventions/Sanctions





# Sharing Information



- Four SOAB approved treatment providers in Allegheny County
- Polygraph Exam admissions
- Monthly Meetings
- Treatment Goals
- Probation Goals
- Boundaries need to be understood and respected



# Court and Violations statistics



<b>191 defendants have been kept for supervision</b>	<b>61 offenders have had violation hearings</b>	<b>144 received a state sentence</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 177 are currently being supervised by the Special Services Unit</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 54 offenders have received sanctions</li><li>• 15 violated their probation and received a state sentence &amp; were sent to prison</li></ul>	

24 of 191 NOT Megan's Law but under judge's request were kept for sex offender supervision

# Challenges vs. Goals of treatment

- Denial
- Deception
- Deviant sexual interest
- Distorted cognitive beliefs

- I did it
- I take full responsibility for my crime
- Compliance with treatment and supervision
- Recidivism –not engaging in high risk behaviors



# Do Treatment Professionals, Victim Services Professionals and Probation Have Different Interests?



- **COMMUNITY SAFETY**
- **PREVENTING VICTIMIZATION**
- **ACCOUNTABILITY OF OFFENDERS**

# Helpful Links



- Center for Sex Offender Management - CSOM
- Pennsylvania Sex Offender Assessment Board - SOAB
- Center for Court Innovation

# Thank You



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