Civil Commitment and Sex Offenders

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Civil Commitment and Sex Offenders
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Summary of Literature Review

Important markers contributing to the Minnesota Commitment and Treatment Act: Sexual Dangerous Persons and Sexual Psychopathic Personalities
- 1939: Psychopathic Personality Law was enacted
- 1991: Department of Corrections (DOC) began screening sex offenders for possible referral to county attorneys for civil commitment
- 1994: Established Sexual Dangerous Persons (SDP) and Sexual Psychopathic Personality (SPP) categories
  - Dennis Darol Linehan: the SDP category was initially created to keep him from being released back into society after the completion of his prison sentence due to the fact that he did not fit criteria in the SPP law
  - 1994-2002: Linehan and many other civilly committed sex offenders continue to appeal their confinement
  - The SDP and SPP laws have survived all challenges thus far
- 2003: There was a significant increase in the number of sex offenders being referred to county attorneys for possible civil commitment in response to the rape and murder of a college student named Dru Sjodin.
  - An offender named Alfonso Rodriguez, Jr.
  - He was released from prison; after his release he kidnapped and murdered Dru Sjodin
  - 2013: Added statute 253D.01 (SDP and SPP categories) to separate those civilly committed as mentally ill and dangerous from the same chapter as committed sex offenders
  - Today: MSOP is currently being challenged as unconstitutional due to the fact that offenders are being committed indefinitely and no one is being released

Methodology

I conducted a literature review to identify specific markers that have contributed to Minnesota’s current civil commitment law. An educational PowerPoint, training manual, and fact sheet were created to educate staff at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program (MSOP).

Key Findings

Curriculum developed for brief 45 min training. Training was piloted and feedback was collected to improve future trainings. Attendees reported increased knowledge which they felt would enhance therapeutic environment.

Discussion

Recommendations:
- Module should become part of regular staff orientation.
- Further comparison between MN’s civil commitment law and other states with civil commitment laws would be useful.
- Comparison of costs among states who have civil commitment programs.
- Further discussion about the treatment approaches of the 19 other states with civil commitment laws.

References: available upon request