



Vol. 1, No. 6
June 1998

On Good Authority is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice. This report was written by staff Research Supervisor Tracy Hahn. It is a summary of an interim evaluation report prepared by Cindy Smith, Ph.D., and Barbara Hayler, Ph.D., of the University of Illinois at Springfield. Copies of the report are available from the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.

The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice in Illinois. The basic functions of the Authority are criminal justice research, federal and state grants administration, and information systems development and support.

For more information, or for copies of this or other publications, contact the Authority at (312) 793-8550.

This study is supported by grant #96-DB-MU-0017, and grant #97-DB-MU-0017, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, June 1998. Printing order #98-063.6/3,000 copies.

Jim Edgar
Governor

Peter B. Bensinger
Chairman

Candice M. Kane
Acting Executive Director

Sex Offender Treatment at the Illinois Youth Center-Harrisburg

Although juvenile sex offenders represent a relatively small proportion of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) Youth Division population, they are a highly publicized population due to safety concerns about their release into the community.

Until the 1980s, research on sex offenders was concentrated almost entirely on adults, even though the weight of clinical evidence now indicates that juvenile and adult sex offenders require different treatment methods. The Sex Offender Treatment program at the Illinois Youth Center at Harrisburg (IYC-H) was started in 1996 to provide **intensive residential treatment to juvenile sex offenders**. This program receives federal funding under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act (ADAA), and has two components: the Sex Offender Treatment Unit (SOTU), a residential treatment unit located at the Harrisburg facility; and the Cook County Juvenile Parole District (CCJPD), which is responsible for the aftercare component.

To aid program development, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority funded a two-year implementation and impact evaluation of the Sex Offender Treatment Unit. The study is scheduled for completion in early 1999. This *On Good Authority* is a summary of the interim report findings from the first year of the evaluation. The implementation evaluation seeks to determine the extent to which the program was carried out according to pre-operational standards, to guide future refinement of the program, and to guide similar programs in the future. The impact evaluation will

seek to determine to what extent the unit is successful in meeting the general program goals of providing effective services to ensure positive treatment outcomes and diverting juveniles from committing sex offenses.

Program Background

The Harrisburg facility began operating in 1983 and is one of seven juvenile centers operated by IDOC. All juvenile males committed to IDOC are first sent to the intake and reception center at St. Charles, where they are interviewed and screened for services. Juveniles can be identified as sex offenders either by their committing offense or because of a prior record of a sexual offense in their file. Juveniles seldom identify themselves as sex offenders and specific screening tests to identify sex offenders are not generally available at the reception center. Prior to the establishment of the Sex Offender Treatment Unit, juveniles recommended for sex offender treatment were frequently transferred to the Illinois Youth Center at Valley View, but other facilities may have also received sex offenders.

The overall goals of the Sex Offender Treatment Unit at Harrisburg are to:

- Conduct assessment and classification evaluations to prioritize youth for treatment services;
- Establish a comprehensive, intensive treatment environment that builds life, cognitive, and behavioral skills;
- Establish a system of **post-release treatment, case management, and support services that will assist**

During the first phase of the program, the primary goal is for each juvenile to learn the concept of a sexual assault cycle and to understand his individual cycle.

program graduates as they return to the community; and,

- Establish process and outcome evaluations.

In addition, the juveniles will:

- Acknowledge and accept full responsibility for their sexual offense history;
- Develop knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and their own arousal patterns;
- Identify and correct general and specific thinking errors;
- Learn to identify feeling states and respond with healthy behaviors; and
- Develop empathy for their victims by gaining an understanding of how sexual abuse and assault affect victims.

The Sex Offender Treatment Unit is part of an integrated treatment program that includes an intensified period of post-release aftercare for those youths released to the Cook County Juvenile Parole District.

The flow chart on page 3 shows the sex offender treatment process prior to implementation of the Sex Offender Treatment Unit, and the process now in place (as shown in the shaded areas). Once a youth has been identified as eligible for the program and sent to the Harrisburg facility, he is referred for clinical assessment to a mental health coordinator who directs a therapeutic program.

A clinical evaluation is done to determine basic eligibility. Eligibility depends on documentation of the youth's status as a sex offender and an individual

clinical assessment that focuses on the need for sex offender-specific treatment. On the basis of this assessment, a formal request to the Program Assignment Committee is made. If the juvenile meets the criteria for sex offender treatment and will have a length of stay appropriate for completion of a 20-24-month treatment program, the assignment committee is asked to assign him to the Sex Offender Treatment Unit wing or place him on the program's waiting list. Juveniles on the waiting list who are determined to be in immediate need of mental health treatment are assigned to a mental health professional who works in the Sex Offender Treatment Unit. The juveniles selected for the program reside in the general population while they await an opening. Juveniles who do not meet the criteria may also receive some services.

The program is located in a building separate from the general population, which allows for a combined treatment and residential area. Juveniles in the unit have limited contact with other residents of the facility. This separation helps to create a psychologically secure and open treatment environment. As of April 1998, the program had 38 participants.

The treatment program consists of four phases. Each phase is intended to reinforce and support the changes that have occurred in the previous phase. The pretreatment phase focuses on learning the rules for the treatment group process, overcoming denial, and accepting responsibility for sex offenses. It also focuses on learning the terminology and understanding the concepts related to sex crimes and risk factors. At the conclusion of this phase, the participant must be prepared to make a commitment to treatment goals.

After the pretreatment phase, participants go to the next phase, where the primary goal is for each juvenile to learn the concept of a sexual assault cycle and to understand his individual cycle. Treatment elements are similar to those in the pretreatment phase. As participants advance to the next phase they are expected to improve their understanding of the consequences of sexual offenses, learn the life factors leading to criminal behavior, and develop ways to intervene in their own personal offense cycles. In the final phase, the participants are expected to develop a specific plan for intervention in their personal offense cycle, exercise group leadership, and complete a relapse prevention plan.

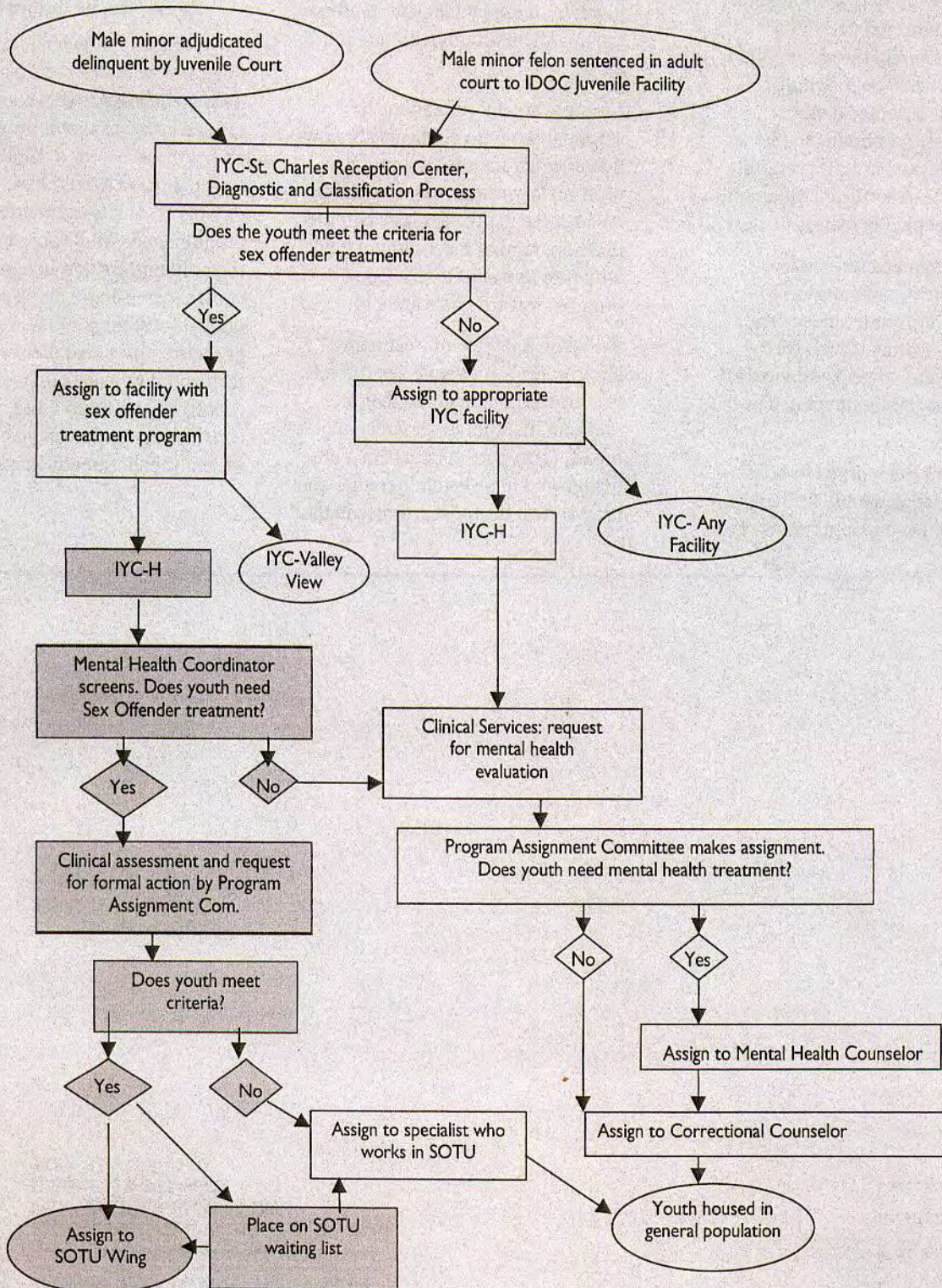
Interim Evaluation Findings

During the first three months of the evaluation, the research team focused on identifying sources of information, developing a working relationship with the program staff, and developing interview protocols. During the remainder of the first year, 35 interviews were conducted with 30 individuals who were connected with the unit. Program documentation, such as manuals, period reports, and various internal documents were also collected for review during the first year. In addition, on-site observations were held and various aspects of the unit were observed for 16 consecutive days.

The first year of the evaluation focused primarily on the implementation and operation of the program, with the impact analysis to take place in the second year. The development and implementation of the aftercare component, and the implementation of a coordinated case management approach,

The Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment Process

The pre-SOTU process is depicted. The shaded areas indicate the process in place at the Illinois Youth Center-Harrisburg (IYC-H) after the implementation of SOTU



will be addressed as youth are released from the program.

As a result of the first-year evaluation, a number of program enhancements have been implemented:

- The appointment of a new program manager has given staff members a unique opportunity to work together to further refine and determine common goals and objectives and responsibilities. The program manager has assumed a more proactive role within the Youth Center management team, resulting in increased support from other units operating within the facility.
- The program manager meets regularly with treatment staff to discuss each juvenile's needs and Individual Treatment Plan (ITP). Specific treatment goals established in the unit are being integrated in the ITP format.
- The program has worked to hold participants accountable for behavior that is considered inappropriate, even

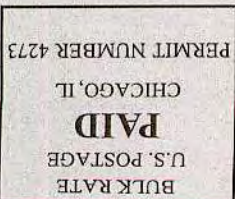
though the behavior may not be a direct violation of general institutional rules. In addition, program staff have tried to keep discipline consistent for all participants.

Because one or more members of the security staff are always with the program youths, they are in a unique position to implement and reinforce the treatment program around the clock.

- Changes and modifications to essential program elements are now documented in order to provide a clear history of the program and its enhancements. To facilitate communication, regular meetings are held with program staff to discuss progress toward goals and objectives.
- Based on a review of treatment approaches for juvenile sex offenders, the evaluation noted that the program incorporates a wide range of broadly accepted elements that are recognized in research literature and have shown the most promise in the

treatment of sex offenders. These elements were modified for implementation in the Sex Offender Treatment Unit setting and brought together in a series of coherent modules. As the program determines the specific trends and characteristics of its offender population, treatment options can be further refined.

The Sex Offender Treatment Unit treatment modules are a work in progress. Treatment components continue to be refined as the program progresses. By the end of the two-year evaluation period, staff members should have a clearer idea of what elements are central to the program and will be able to focus on them. It appears that juvenile sex offenders are increasingly being sent to Harrisburg as awareness of the treatment program grows, and the results of the forthcoming final evaluation report should be helpful to other jurisdictions considering enhancement or development of sex offender treatment programs. ■



ILLINOIS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INFORMATION AUTHORITY
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3997
Phone: 312-793-8550
TDD: 312-793-4170

