

# The Concept of Sexual Offender Risk: An Introduction

A Presentation to the Sexual Offender Civil Commitment Task Force

February 25, 2013

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# What is sexual offender risk?

The chance that an offender will commit another sexual offense

The chance that an offender will commit another criminal offense

The factors considered relatively (separately and in total) that contribute to the above

# Risk Assessment: The Ultimate Objective

Ultimate objective: correct prediction of who is dangerous (and under what conditions) while minimizing false positives - the incorrect labeling of someone as dangerous when in fact they are not

# Assessment of risk

Clinical judgment

Structured clinical judgment

Actuarial risk assessment

# Clinical judgment

"I know sex offenders and I know this one  
will not reoffend"

"I know sex offenders and I know this one  
will reoffend"

# Structured clinical judgment

Assessment derived from empirically-confirmed factors

Actuarial guidance + clinical judgment

# Actuarial risk assessment

Statistical determination of risk based on  
norm samples

STATIC-99R

STATIC-2002

MnSOST-R

MnSOST 3.1

RRASOR

# Actuarials

Gathers a series of variables believed to have predictive validity, applies relative weights to each variable, and combines these data into an aggregated risk score and classification.



Compared to clinical methods, actuarial risk instruments are a preferred method to discern sex offenders risk for sexual as well as violent recidivism because, unlike clinical practices, they are considered inexpensive, objective and modestly accurate.

# How are risk factors classified?

Static risk factors

Dynamic risk factors

# Static Factors

Factors which do not change or are unchangeable

Usually are more objective (generally)

Usually are easier to measure (generally)

Static, historical variables (e.g. prior offenses, childhood maladjustment) can indicate deviant developmental trajectories and enduring propensities to sexually reoffend.

# Static Factors: Examples

Age

Prior sexual offenses

Number of arrests/charges

Number of sentencing dates

Victim factors

Marital status

On the front end of the civil commitment process, the parameters of risk are basically outlined by statute, and are substantially static variables

# Dynamic Factors

Those factors which change over time, or which can be made to change through treatment and intervention

# Dynamic Factors: Examples

Mental stability

Alcohol use/abuse

Attitude toward supervision

Attitudes- toward women, children

Sexual preoccupation



Evaluating changes in risk levels requires the consideration of dynamic risk factors, such as cooperation with supervision, deviant sexual preferences

**Sexual deviance**

**Antisocial orientation**

**(Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon,  
2004)**

# Mediating/moderating/ managing risk

Control: MSOP

Treatment: MSOP (and community support  
and supervision)

Obviously, treatment focuses on changes in dynamic factors

The most important dynamic factors are those that respond to treatment

# Treatment

It works

It's available

It's necessary for release

It's necessary to reduce risk

Does all treatment need to be completed  
within the institution?

Residing and reintegrating in the  
community is a necessary aspect of  
treatment that cannot be replicated within  
an institution, especially with men who are  
institutionalized

MSOP Phase 2 focuses on application of treatment gains, decompression and deinstitutionalization which are all crucial for successful reintegration and demonstrated meaningful change

Phase 3 puts the Phase 2 didactic gains into practice

# Treatment decisions

Separation of interests

Field of expertise



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