



# SEX OFFENDER MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT and PLANNING INITIATIVE

# SMART

Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring,  
Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking

**“Cognitive-behavioral/relapse prevention approaches have been identified as being effective at reducing both sexual and nonsexual recidivism.”**

Perpetrators of sex crimes are often seen as needing special management practices. As a result, jurisdictions across the country have implemented laws and policies that focus specifically on sex offenders, often with extensive public support. At the same time, the criminal justice community has increasingly recognized that crime control and prevention strategies—including those targeting sex offenders—are far more likely to work when they are based on scientific evidence.

Recognizing the important role scientific evidence plays, the SMART Office developed the Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative (SOMAPI), a project designed to assess the state of research and practice in sex offender management. Recommendations stemming from SOMAPI informed this report.

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## Adult Section Highlights

- ♦ An accurate accounting of the true rates of sexual violence is impossible because so many sex crimes are hidden from public view.
- ♦ There is no simple answer to the question of why people engage in this behavior; however, sexual abuse is learned.
- ♦ More research on the onset and maintenance of Internet sex offending is needed to design effective interventions.
- ♦ Observed sexual recidivism rates range from 5 percent after 3 years to 24 percent after 15 years; more research documenting the recidivism patterns of different types of sex offenders is needed.
- ♦ The field is moving toward risk assessment tools that incorporate static and dynamic risk factors; these tools have the benefit of providing targets for intervention.
- ♦ Although recent studies suggest that certain treatment approaches work, more high-quality studies on treatment effectiveness are needed.

## Juvenile Section Highlights

- ♦ The developmental differences between juveniles and adults are extensive and profound, such as considering future consequences, regulating emotions, and controlling behavior.
- ♦ Adolescents who commit sex offenses have much less extensive criminal histories, fewer antisocial peers, and fewer substance abuse problems compared with nonsexual offenders.
- ♦ Observed sexual recidivism rates are generally lower for juveniles than adult sex offenders, ranging from 7 to 13 percent.
- ♦ Juvenile risk assessment instruments should focus on estimates of short-term rather than long-term risk and should incorporate protective factors.
- ♦ Research studies consistently find that sex offender treatment works with youth, and cost-benefit analysis demonstrates that these programs provide a positive return on taxpayer investment.