

Transitional housing for sexual offenders essay

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Introduction Transitional Housing for sexual offenders was set up with noble intentions but the program has not managed to achieve the intentions initially set out. The purpose of this paper is to examine how transitional housing has fallen short of its initial plan and recommendations will be given on how to handle such problems. Literature review The Board of Corrections (2005) defines a transitional housing program for sexual offenders as follows; " Transitional housing is a program that provides housing for one or more offenders who have either been transferred or paroled from the Department of Correction by the Parole Board or placed on probation by a circuit or district court.

An offender's home or the residence of an offender's family member shall not be considered a transitional housing facility for purposes of this regulation." (BOC, 2005, p 1) It should be noted that other state bodies and federal institutions understand transitional housing in a different light. For instance, the King County (2003) affirm that transitional housing refers to secure facilities that have been created for those criminals who have completed their terms in prison but are still seen as people who are not ready for entry into society. Numerous states have their own pieces of legislations with regard to the construction, administration and admission of sexual offenders into these transitional facilities. However, for most states, transitional houses have shifted and entered into residential neighborhoods in most states. This issue has created some controversies among affected parties because some residents are not notified about the issue. A lot of literature covers the history of sexual offenders' housing and for purposes of this paper; a brief analysis of the same shall be done. It may be summarized

as follows· The Community Protection Act was passed in
1990· A Sexual predator law was revived - 1994· A
first halfway house was built - 2001· Minimal commitment
required for sexual offenders - 2006

In the year 1990, the state passed an Act commonly referred to as the Community protection Act or the Sex predator Act.

Here, the Act specified that the state had the ability to hold a sexual offender for as long as it deemed necessary after one had completed their term in prison and if a civil court had ruled that the particular individual was a threat to the general community. In 1994, a federal court judge ruled in favor of sexual offenders who had been taken to a transitional housing program in Mc Neil Island. Here, the judge ruled that most of the offenders were actually not granted their due rights in terms of adequate mental health care. The judge also asserted that these transitional houses were too restrictive and opted to fine the offending state fifty dollars for every sexual offender in the transitional house. In the year 2001, many states and countries began identifying more suitable areas for establishing halfway houses. Some of these sites brought about objections from residents but this did not deter most of them continuing with their overall objectives. (King County, 2003)As of 2006, most states maintain comprehensive records of sexual offenders who are not committed civilly while at the same time having completed their prison terms.

This database is available to the public and has gone a long way in improving some of the transitional housing practices in these areas. After an examination of the history of transitional housing for sexual offenders, it is <https://assignbuster.com/transitional-housing-for-sexual-offenders-essay/>

imperative to look into some of the requirements for a transitional housing program. In other words, this is what is expected of transitional houses prior to being granted a license upon application.

The first thing is that the site chosen for the program must be approximately fifty feet away from any institution that is geared to offering services to children or persons under the age of eighteen years. Some of the facilities that are incorporated in these descriptions include schools and day care centers. (Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, 2008) The other technical aspect that must be covered in these transitional houses are; offers housing to sexual offenders over the age of eighteen years, institutes security measures twenty four hours a day throughout and provision of housing to sexual offenders for those on parole for no greater than three months unless special circumstances have been laid out by the Director of the Department. Transitional housing is set up with the aim of preparing sexual offenders to re-enter the community. In this regard, they need to have certain features that can enhance the achievement of this goal.

First of all, such facilities ought to have group sessions in which most of the offenders meet not less than three times in a week through the efforts of representatives from SOMB certified members. Additionally, members on parole or probation will also be required to be supervised by probation officers so as to ascertain that they have attended those sessions. Through such programs, then the transitional housing will go along way in rehabilitating sexual offenders. Transitional housing must also provide treatment and counseling plans to state authorities or illustrate that they are working towards the rehabilitation goal. In order for the program to work, <https://assignbuster.com/transitional-housing-for-sexual-offenders-essay/>

then those offenders who leave the premises must be duly monitored by signing out. In case there are certain members who fail to follow this procedure, then they must immediately be noted down. Lastly, transitional housing needs to provide sexual offenders with other basic services such as:

- Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- Vocational services
- Medical treatment

All these services are only possible to achieve when the transitional house administration has a sound referral network which they can work with when implementing some of these issues.

Additionally, when sexual offenders are being given these services, then they have the right to privacy and confidentiality of the information must be maintained within legal limits. Research methodologies

The main research method to be used in this project is secondary research. The reason why this particular method was chosen is that there is adequate information on the research question that can allow a conclusion to be made on the matter wholly and comprehensively.

Additionally, this method of research is quite feasible owing to the fact that primary data collection exercises may require too much financing. This may become quite problematic especially because the research budget is limited. (Creswell, 1998)

The time factor is particularly important in deciding to choose this method of research. This is because primary research would involve identifying a research population, selecting the representative group and its size, conducting the research, collecting and finally analyzing data that may not even be cohesive. All these tasks are very time consuming and may actually lead to haphazard work which may eventually cause one to

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present substandard work. Secondary sources of information allow the researcher to focus on the most important details thus coming up with comprehensive solutions to the research problem. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) In close relation to the latter assertion is the fact that secondary sources are known to be more accurate than the primary ones. This is because most of the data to be used is drawn from large investigations that utilized huge sample sizes.

Experts agree that large scale surveys are always more accurate than conducting small interviews or questionnaires among some selected candidates. (Creswell, 2003) Regardless of all these advantages, there are certain instances in which secondary research can prove to be problematic. For instance, perceived definitions for the researcher may actually differ in the secondary sources. For example, when addressing the research question, it may be possible to find that certain governmental agencies may use the term community service and transitional housing in the same manner. Also geographical areas may differ in terms of legislations and may not necessarily apply to different parts of the country.

The use of secondary resources may also be problematic because of time scales. Some researches or censuses may have been conducted some fifteen years ago and a lot could have changed over that time. To deal with this deficiency, the research will primarily focus on research conducted within the recent years. Another challenge that can arise out of the use of secondary sources as a research methodology is the issue of source bias. In certain instances, some groups may have vested interests in the matter under research and may therefore alter statistics to suit their requirements. One <https://assignbuster.com/transitional-housing-for-sexual-offenders-essay/>

such example for this particular case are researches conducted by religious organizations. Such groups may want to portray transitional housing for sex offenders in a negative light and it may therefore be advisable to look for other more reliable sources. This will be the case in the research.

(Patton, 2002)The following sources of information will be used in the research in order to answer the research question-Sex Offender Supervision Survey of 1999: the latter survey had been conducted in order to determine how sex offenders are treated in the state of Minnesota. The research was fairly reliable because eighty two out of the eighty seven criminal justice representatives responded.-Office of legislative Auditor 2005: the latter was an audit of transitional housing or sexual offenders.-2000 Community Based Sex Offender Program Report: the latter research was an analysis of some of the challenges and successes facing transitional housing for sexual offenders. The American Probation and Parole Association 2003; the latter was an Issue Paper on Caseload standards to be applied in any part of the country. The latter sources were chosen largely because the researches were comprehensively done.

These were government sponsored and there were adequate resources deployed towards the establishment of sound findings. Also, because the sample sizes were large, then it is right to say that these sources are fairly reliable. (Creswell, 2003)It should also be noted that in each of the latter reports, the organization was such that the reporters first provided a background about the problem.

Thereafter, there was a discussion of some of the deficiencies that were existent in the areas under study. This was then followed by an examination into the recommendations concerning the sexual offenders themselves, the public and concerns about the public's safety. Additionally, recommendations were also given about the tendency for re-offense and how these risks could be reduced. Analysis and findings

One of the major concerns facing the creation of transitional housing for sexual offenders is the reception that these centers receive from members of the community. It has been found that a large percentage of the transitional houses are actually created through the process of purchasing residential property and then changing it into a commercial transitional house. What this does is that paroled sexual offenders are then allowed to enter into communities. These affected residents are not even informed about the issues before hand and this has caused lot of disgruntlement among neighborhoods. (Building Credibility, 2003)

It should also be noted that the creation of transitional housing in residential areas has caused big changes in the way real estate markets operate and their networks thereof.

This is largely as a result of the unregulated creation of transitional housing in various states. The issue is made been more complex thanks to the Fair Housing Act. According to this act, persons who are suffering from addictions or drugs and alcohol are allowed to live in group homes according to the latter mentioned piece of legislation. While one may assume that the latter groups is not related to sexual offenders in any way. Surveys have shown that this is not actually the case. Some group homes maybe set up under the premise of dealing with alcohol addiction.

However, afterwards, it may be possible to find that such homes may then change to admit sexual offenders who are not regulated by the Department of corrections. A number of concerns have been put forward by certain community members that the programs or guidelines set out in the treatment programs actually do not work and that communities are at such a greater risk because of these transitional houses. Some of the problems that had been identified by these groups include the sexual offense registry and the risk that the public is susceptible too. In the state of Iowa, research carried out there indicated that sexual offenders in transitional houses may register prior to departure from the transitional houses but their movements are quite difficult to monitor thus placing the public at risk. It should also be noted that the locations of these transitional houses have minimal effects on risks of reoffending.

As it has been seen in the literature review, one of the most important requirements when setting up transitional housing for sexual offenders is that the premises must not be fifty feet away from institutions harboring young children. What this means is that there was the assumption that if the sexual offenders are located far away from their target group, then chances are that they will be hampered from committing those offenses again. However, surveys indicate that this is not true. When offenders have the will to commit sexual crimes, then they will still reoffend regardless of the proximity of their target group. This is because they can travel to those children if they so wish or if their need to commit the crime is too high, then they may change the demographics of their potential victims and opt for persons over the age of eighteen years. (Joint Committee on Administrative

Rules, 2008) Regardless of the latter negatives, it should be noted that transitional housing in principle is a viable option for offenders who may be classified as high risk offenders or those who may be dangerous to the community.

By creating a situation in which shared living arrangements are available to individuals, then the criminal offenders are likely to deal with the challenges of their respective areas by obliging with the overall need to meet these perspectives. It should also be noted that not all categories of sexual offenders are accounted for through transitional housing. This is because in certain states, their laws have not covered sexual offenders who may be on probation or parole. Consequently, the latter category have missed out on the benefits that transitional housing can provide to a particular sexual offender. Cases of absconding are also high in some states. Some of the sexual offenders who are placed in transitional houses may abscond their treatment programs and somehow find a way of dealing with the registration process.

What this does is that it leaves sexual offenders in the same state that they came in thus showing little hope of them ever being dispatched back into society. Another closely related concern about the transitional houses is that not all sexual offenders or predators may respond to treatment plans offered there. This is largely because some of them may be so hardened.

Also, because of the rules and regulations placed around these treatment programs, it is likely to find that individuals may choose to oblige only as a matter of procedure and not for their own good. (Minnesota Department of

Corrections, 2000)It has also been noted that when too much location restrictions are placed on offenders about where they can or cannot go, then chances are they will be more isolated. They are denied from accessing social services, employment opportunities to other forms of social support that they require in order to survive in the outside world.

This then creates an endless cycle in which sexual offenders are not adequately prepared to meet challenges of these areas. It should be noted that some sexual offenders may be in prison for excessively long periods of time. Consequently, if transitional programs are to work for them, than there should have been some preparation for this in prisons. However, most state prisons lack these kinds of arrangements and this is a matter that many community corrections experts have noted and are actually disgruntled with.

(Office of legislative Auditor, 2005)Many transition housing supervisions are conducted in very different ways depending on the location. These differences may arise even at county level. Part of the problem lies in the fact that transitional housing is a complex issue that is run by a number of agencies and operates under different structures. Consequently, this presents a lot of difficulties in monitoring and coordinating the activities going in the houses. This could probably be the reason why some of the interventions have not been effective. Policy recommendations and

ConclusionThe guidelines chosen for transitional housing are a bit misplaced. This is because they have been formed under the assumption that placing sexual offenders away from children actually reduces the risk of re-offending or causing harm to the community.

However, research has shown that this is not what actually occurs. Offenders are likely to move to other locations to find their victims and commit crime. Also, it is very unlikely for one to go to the same neighborhood that they had previously committed a crime in because their faces can be easily identified. The best alternative is for the Board of Corrections in almost all states to scrape this aspect from the licensing requirements and guidelines. Another reason why this aspect should be scraped is that residential locations for sexual offenders actually place them at a greater risk of isolation.

This is because they may lack work and education and thus be put in a position where they have no other issue to turn to except committing another sexual crime. Consequently, the best way to deal with this matter is by eliminating blanket offender restrictions of transitional housing. The best way forward is by considering specific cases. All states would be at a better footing if they instated offender by offender restrictions. (Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, 2008) In order to promote effective intervention programs, it would be favorable for the offenders to be given an opportunity to prepare for transition housing by creating programs in prison for those who fall in the high risk category. Lastly, transitional housing would be more effective if there was more coordination of transitional houses.

This eliminates complexities and would enable weeding out of programs that do not work.

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