Module 4

Communication: A Tool for Sex Offender Management

Synopsis

The goal of this module is to provide information about communicating when working with sex offenders. Attention is given to communicating with sex offenders, victims, fellow probation officers, and other members of the supervisory network. Distinctions between rural and urban departments are addressed. Information on improving inter- and intra-agency communication is provided.

Learning Objectives

After completing this module, participants should be able to:

1. Describe three types of communication and why they are important to supervision and treatment of sex offenders.
2. Describe two differences between urban and rural departments that potentially shape communication.
3. Identify three things officers can do to improve their intra-agency communication.
4. Identify three things officers can do to improve inter-agency communication.

Participants Materials

Participant Manual
Handouts

Facilitate the Module

LCD projector and laptop
Flip chart and markers

Handouts

Handout D1	Communicating with Sex Offenders: Questions Pertaining to Sexual History Tool
Handout D2	Communication, General Prevention Tool
Handout D3	Things to Remember when Interviewing Sex Offenders
Handout D4	Communicating with Sex Offenders: Questions Pertaining to Sexual Offense Tool
Handout D5	Types of Denial used by Sex Offenders
Handout D6	Signs of Lying
Handout D7	Structured Sex Offender Treatment Review Tool
Handout D8	Accountability Tool
Handout D9	Safety Plan Tool
Handout D10	Tips for Communicating with Victims
Handout D11	Communicating with Sex Offenders: Checklist Tool

Time Frame

Total 1 hour, 15 minutes

Module 4 At A Glance

Time	Description
5 minutes	Goal and Objectives
5 minutes	Communicating with Sex Offenders Activity
30 minutes	Communicating with Sex Offenders
5 minutes	SSTOR Tool Activity
5 minutes	Documenting Case Information
5 minutes	Communicating with Victims
10 minutes	Communicating within the Agency
5 minutes	Communicating between Agencies
5 minutes	Summary

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Communication and Sex Offenders

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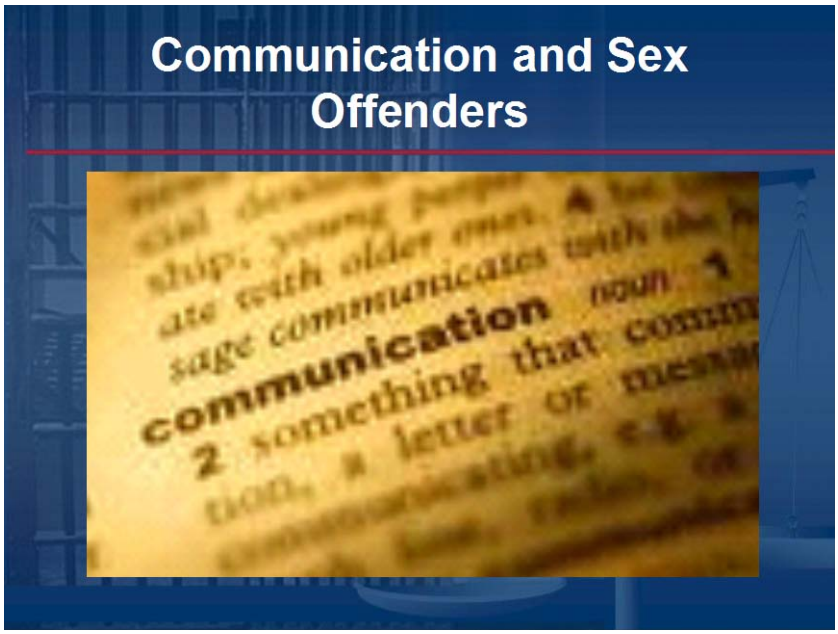

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Communication and Sex Offenders

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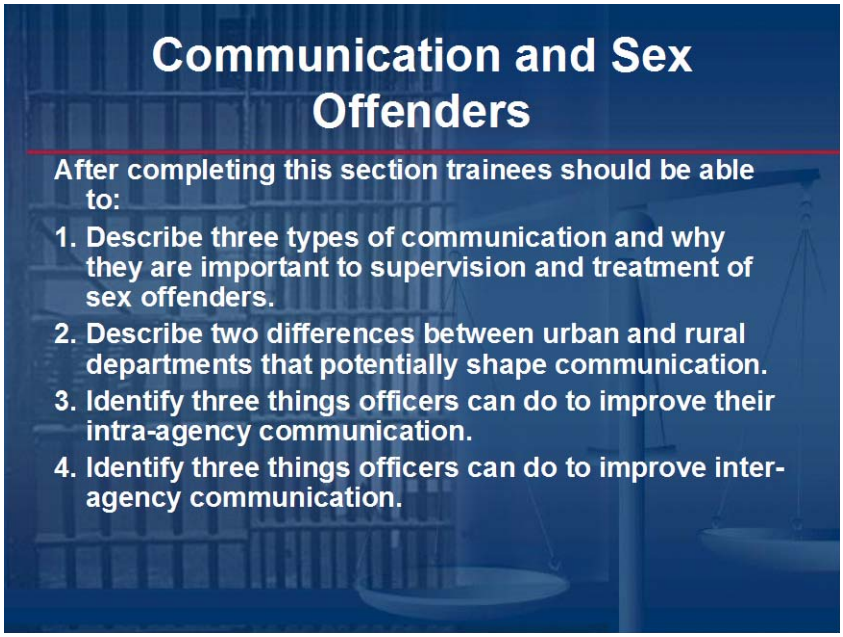

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Activity 4.1: Communicating with Sex Offenders

For this activity, participants are asked to divide themselves into groups of two for a role-playing exercise. You are to pick someone of the same gender that you do not know. You will need to use Handout D1 (Communicating with Sex Offenders: Questions pertaining to Sexual History Tool). One of the group members will act as a supervising officer and the other will act as an offender for this exercise. You will go through the questions with the "offender" making up his/her answers. Take about five minutes to go through these questions.

After five minutes, participants will report to the entire group their reactions to the exercise. Sex offenders will need to be asked these sorts of questions and this list of questions provides a tool that can be used to lead their discussions with sex offenders.

This module focuses on the importance of communication in supervising sex offenders. The focus is not just on communicating with sex offenders, but rather on communicating with several different parties involved in supervising sex offenders.

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Containment Approach

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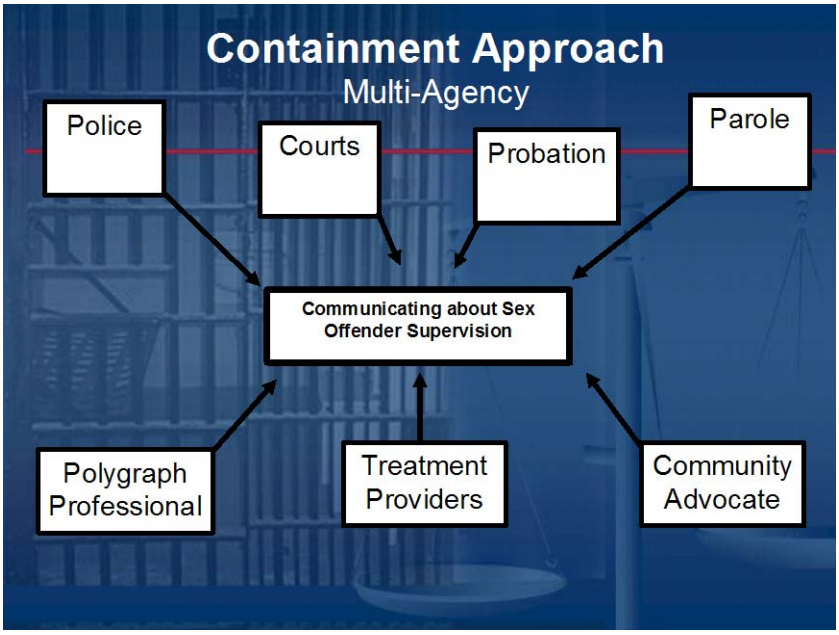

Community corrections officers cannot rely solely on offender's self reports to gather the information necessary to effectively supervise sex offenders.

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Why Communication is Important

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In essence, probation officers must coordinate information processing between all of the representatives involved in the containment response to sex offenders.

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Activity 4.2: "What is communication?" The instructors will ask participants to share their ideas of how to define communication when supervising sex offenders. This is a brief exercise last about five minutes to review your answers.

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Communication barriers are different in rural areas

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Communication and information sharing is influenced by the community context in which the supervision is occurring.

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Availability of Resources

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One program reviewer described the following experience as part of a review of services for sex offenders in Western North Carolina:

"As part of the review, I accompanied a senior probation officer on a routine field supervision of sex offenders. During this particular field supervision, which spanned one 8-hour workday, we were scheduled to see two sex offenders and one sex offender treatment provider. In order to accomplish this, we had to drive approximately 240 miles, and we still were able to make face to face contact with two of the three people we sought to see…For many officers supervising sex offenders…in rural or remote locations, this is part of their 'routine'" (Baerga-Buffler, 2006).

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Types of Communication

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Goals of Communication

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Insight into an offender's life is gained by developing a structured relationship with the offender.

Participant's Note: Refer to Handout D3 (Things to Remember When Interviewing Sex Offenders).

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Reducing Influence of Manipulation

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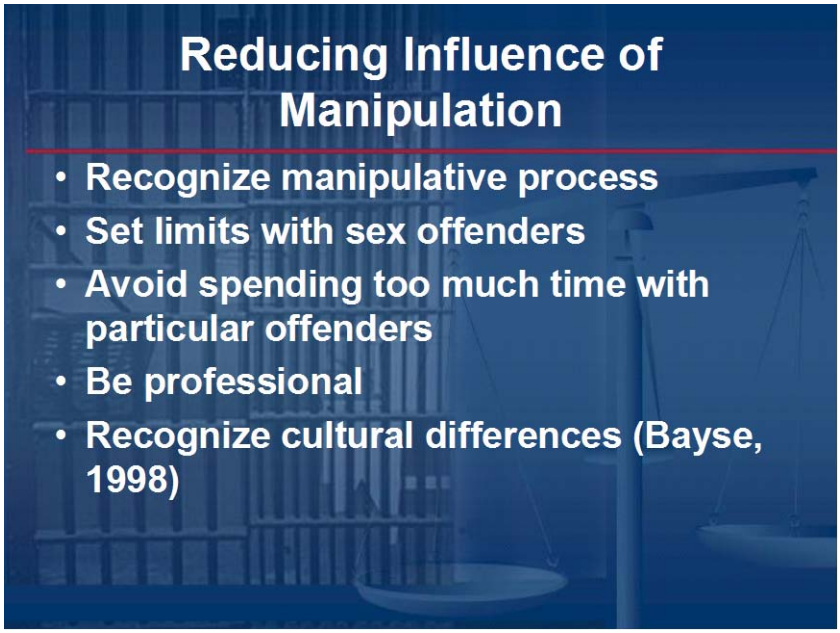

One parole supervisor told researchers, “Being pulled into an offender’s manipulation is the biggest problem. Because offenders are so manipulative, officers need constant training” (English et al., 1997, p. 8).

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Reducing Manipulation

Participant's Note: This slide utilizes Handout D5.

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A common view of rationalizations and excuses is to understand them as forms of denial.

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Level One: Weak Avoidance

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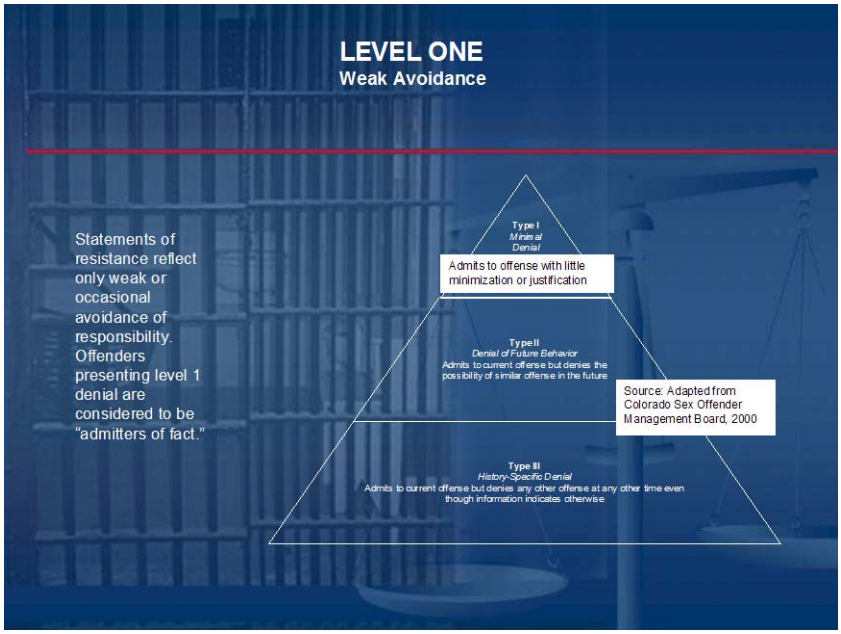
Participant's Note: Slides 4-11 through 4-14 are four slides that explain four levels of avoidance or denial by sex offenders.



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Level Two: Projection/Moderate Denial

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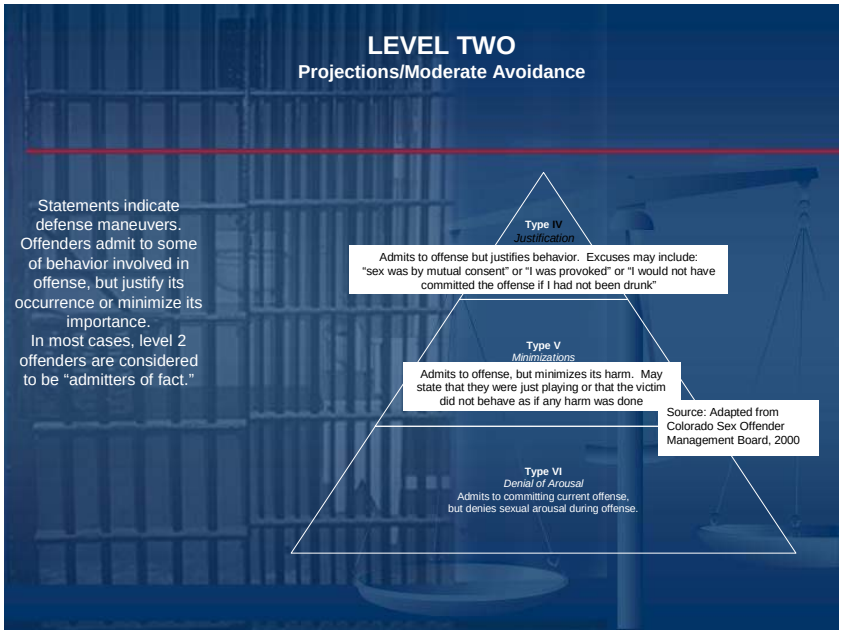

Projection/moderate denial refers to cases in which offenders admit that they did some of the things they were accused of, but they justify the behavior or minimize the consequences.

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Level Three: Projections/Strong Avoidance

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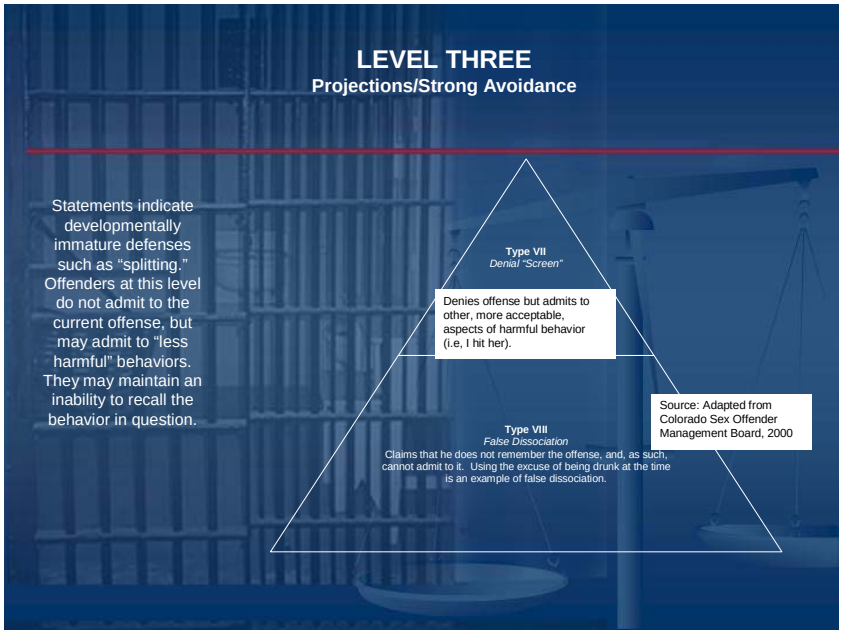

Projections/strong denial refers to situations when the offender denies the sexual offense, but admits to doing something less harmful to the victim.

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Level Four: Primitive Denial/Severe Avoidance

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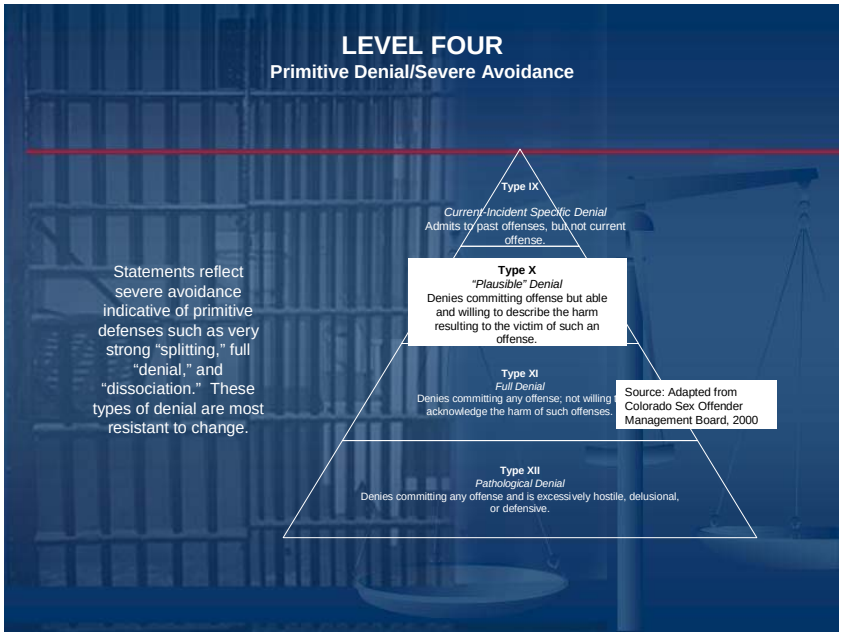

The fourth level of denial is primitive denial/severe avoidance. Offenders exhibiting this level of denial are most resistant to change. While some at this level may admit past misconduct, all offenders at this level deny their current offense (CSOM, 2005).

Participant's Note: Please refer to Handouts D6 (Signs of Lying) and D7 (The Structured Sex Offender Treatment Review Tool).

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Activity 4.3: Dealing with Denial

Participants are asked to divide in groups of two for a brief role playing exercise to complete Handout D7. This should take about five minutes to complete and review the form.

After five minutes, participants are asked if they have any questions about the form. How might the form be modified based on offense type, offender type, or locality (e.g., rural versus urban communities)?

Participant's Note:
The use of tools like the SSTOR is particularly beneficial because such tools provide an easy way for officers to keep records of the supervision process. The entire purpose of communicating with sex offenders is to gather information so that officers can monitor the offender's activities and make sure that public safety concerns are addressed. Supervising officers must make sure that information such as case notes, chronological reports, and the NCIC is up-to-date for each sex offender. Doing so is useful for several reasons. These reports can provide assistance in court. They also are useful for collaborative meetings and discussions between officers and other members of the containment team. Collectively, the records can be seen as a flexible journal that can be modified to particular case plans.

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Pre-Sentence Report

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Participant's Note: Please refer to Handout D8 (Accountability Tool).

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Case Management Software

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Communicating with Victims

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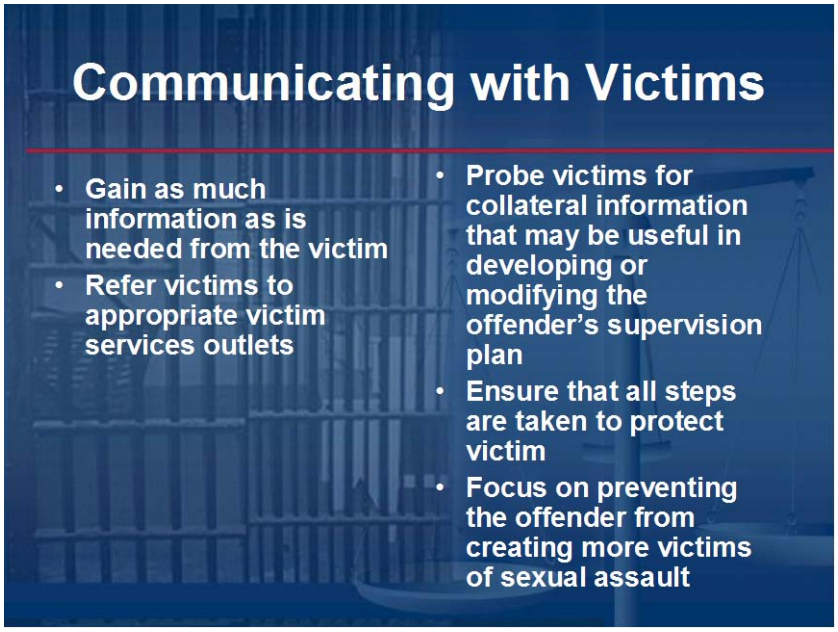

Participant's Note: Please refer to Handout D9 (A Safety Planning Tool) and Handout D10 (Tips for Communicating with Victims).

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Communicating Within the Agency

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Interagency Communication and Supervision Network

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Communication Between Agencies

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Communication Between Agencies

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Participant's Note: Handout D11 (Communicating with Sex Offenders: Checklist Tool).

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