

Implementation and Impact of the Central District of California's Suicide Prevention Program for Federal Sex Crime Defendants

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THE COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS field appears to have embraced the notion that new program development should be guided by systematic, evidence-based reviews and the identification of “best practices” for the field (Tusinski Miofsky & Byrne, 2011; Byrne, 2009). However, new programs are developed and implemented in the community corrections field for a variety of reasons, often without the guidance of empirical research to inform policy and practice. The federal pretrial program highlighted in the following article fits this depiction. Between 2004 and 2005, four individuals charged with possession of child pornography, a federal sex crime, committed suicide in California's Central District. One of the four suicide victims was identified in news accounts as a 63-year-old engineering professor at California Polytechnic in San Luis Obispo, who hanged himself in June, 2004, approximately nine months after being indicted in federal court for the possession of child pornography (Levine, 2008). One has to wonder about the timing of the suicide, and what triggered the event. Hoffer, Shelton, Behnke, and Erdberg's preliminary review of suicides during federal sex crime investigations revealed that a significant number of suicides—about 1 in 3—occur within 48 hours of an

individual finding out he is under investigation by the FBI for sex crimes. There are a range of possible stressors—shame, remorse, marital/relationship, job, physical injury/illness, financial strain, fear of prison—that may vary over time for these defendants. In the four California cases, we do not know what triggered the decision to commit suicide; however, the cases did raise questions about the impact of aggressively pursuing child pornography and other forms of Internet sex crime. The problem of suicide by sex crime suspect (Hoffer et al., 2010) and sex crime defendants (Byrne, Pattavina, & Lurigio, 2012) is now gaining increased attention; as public scrutiny grows, new approaches to suicide assessment and new strategies for suicide prevention will need to be designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Media accounts of this case—and other suicides by individuals awaiting trial on federal sex crime charges around this time—prompted meetings in 2005 and 2006 among representatives from federal agencies involved with sex crime defendants at the pretrial stage in the Central District, including the pretrial services office, probation office, public defender's office, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Judiciary, and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. Based on input from these interested parties, pretrial

services in the Central District California “created a program to protect defendants against self-incrimination while managing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and suicidality” (Byrne, Lurigio, & Pimentel, 2009: 42). The program was developed in collaboration with a mental health provider, *Sharper Future*, which was already providing treatment services for convicted sex offenders under community supervision. The challenge was to design a similar treatment program for sex crime defendants that provided support to these defendants, while protecting their rights against self-incrimination during group sessions. The curriculum and final program model were reviewed and approved by all parties, including the chief magistrate judge, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Federal Public Defender. The program began in 2006 with two clients, and it has grown steadily over the past six years. By 2010, there were more than 40 pretrial sex crime defendants in the program, and over 100 defendants that participated in the program prior to trial/sentencing. There have been no reports of suicide by sex crime defendants referred to the program since its inception, which suggests that the program—despite its origins in tragedy rather than evidence-based

research—may actually be working. In 2009, the Central District's Pretrial Services Office decided to request an independent evaluation of the program; the evaluation was completed in October, 2011.

In the following article, we highlight the results of our evaluation of the program's implementation and provide a preliminary assessment of program impact. Due to space limitations, we do not include our review of the available research on the nature and extent of the suicide problem among sex crime defendants (but see Byrne, Pattavina, & Lurigio, 2012). In addition, our findings related to the impact of the program on the mental health status of sex crime defendants are only briefly summarized here (but see Byrne, Rebovich, Lurigio, Tusinski Miofsky, & Stowell, 2011). In the concluding section, we discuss the implications of the study for research, policy, and practice.

The *Sharper Future* Intervention Model

Once an individual is arraigned in the Central District of California for violating a federal sex crime statute, a decision is made on the appropriateness of pretrial release or pretrial detention. The pretrial detention rate for sex crime defendants is 53 percent nationally, and the rate of detention here is about the same. As a group, sex crime defendants are overwhelmingly a low-risk population, based on previous research (see, e.g., Motivans, 2007). The sex crime defendants we examined faced a variety of charges, including child pornography, sexual exploitation of minors, coercion or enticement of minors, transfer of obscene materials to minors, and other sex crimes violating federal statutes. In the Central District, *all* defendants with charges for sexual offenses were released with a mental health or treatment condition. (In addition, several defendants had other conditions of release imposed, including curfews, computer monitoring, and drug testing.)

In the Central District, pretrial "treatment" involves participation in the *Sharper Future* program. As we have observed in an earlier review: "At first blush, it seems logical that such a defendant would be referred to sex offender treatment. However, the unique dynamics of traditional sex offender treatment can impinge on a pretrial defendant's rights against self-incrimination, which is protected under the Fifth and Sixth Amendments" (Byrne, Lurigio, & Pimentel, 2009:41). The challenge faced by program developers in the

Central District of California was to design an intervention strategy that did not violate these basic constitutional protections. Unlike traditional sex offender treatment, sex crime defendants in the *Sharper Future* program are not encouraged to admit guilt or even discuss details of their alleged crimes. In fact, group session facilitators prohibit any discussion of the alleged offenses of sex crime defendants.

We note that some therapists who have reviewed the program are skeptical of providing treatment in a group setting without discussing the defendant's alleged offenses. In a 2008 *Cal Law* article, Los Angeles Federal defender Myra Sun provided the following assessment of the *Sharper Future* intervention model: "Even if therapists avoid implicating details, it is inevitable that group participants will compare notes about their situations. I don't think it is humanly possible not to talk about the case" (as quoted in Levine, 2008). Sun explained the problem raised by such disclosures during group sessions: the government may seek "information from people in group therapy" (as quoted in Levine, 2008). While this situation has not arisen in the Central District, it could occur if the program is replicated in other sites without the partnership agreements put in place in the Central District. Therefore, any site seeking to replicate the *Sharper Future* model or anything similar to it would need to seek out similar agreements with all players, including the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Federal Public Defender or, in state and local systems, their equivalents.

The *Sharper Future* program model consists of three components: (1) Crisis Intervention, (2) Initial assessment/treatment plan development, and (3) Group/individual treatment. In the section below, we briefly describe this model. Our description is based on an earlier published review (Byrne, Lurigio, & Pimentel, 2009), along with presentation materials by pretrial services and *Sharper Future* personnel (Chankin, Pimentel, & Sandoval, 2009; Pimentel & Byrne, 2010), and interviews with the treatment provider staff.

Program Component 1: Crisis Intervention:

Upon release from court, the defendant is immediately referred to the *Sharper Future* program for an initial psychological assessment. During this initial assessment, the defendant is evaluated for depression, anxiety, and possible suicidal ideation. The need for any additional services, such as psychiatric medication or individual counseling, is also

identified at this time. The primary focus of this initial assessment is suicide risk, based on the assumption that defendants charged with federal sex crimes are at the greatest risk of self-injury at arraignment, due to the shame and embarrassment associated with the public airing of the charges. As we noted earlier, the preliminary research by the FBI on suicide among individuals investigated for sex crimes appears to support this view (Hoffer et al., 2010), since almost a third of the suicides being investigated by the FBI researchers occurred within 48 hours of these individuals becoming aware that they were the subject of an FBI sex crime investigation. However, these findings may not be applicable, since our sample of indicted sex crime defendants have known they were the subject of a federal investigation for some time. Unfortunately, there is currently no research to substantiate the view that suicide risk is greater at this point in the court process. In fact, it is well documented that suicide is difficult to predict at any decision point or specific time period; most prediction instruments can barely improve on chance (Perry, Marandos, Coulton, & Johnson, 2010). In a recent review, Peterson, Skeem, and Manchak (2011) have suggested a simple alternative strategy: asking the individual whether he/she is at risk to self-harm in the next few weeks; their research suggests that this simple strategy works just as well as the more intensive reviews. This caveat aside, there are a variety of reasons to conduct the type of initial assessment used here:

- Determine level of suicidal ideation and level of anxiety
- Determine if a suicidal contract (or 5150) is needed
- Determine if client needs to be referred to a psychiatrist for evaluation and/or medication monitoring
- Determine if client is in need of individual therapy in addition to group therapy (Pimentel & Byrne, 2010).

Program Component 2: Initial Assessment and Treatment Plan

The preliminary assessment of suicide risk is followed by a clinical interview and the completion of several standard assessment instruments, including the Beck Depression Inventory, Beck Hopeless Scale, and Beck Anxiety Inventory. The specific treatment protocol used by *Sharper Future* is developed based on the results of this initial assessment. During the clinical interview, the following items are reviewed:

- Medical History
- Mental Health History
- Educational and Occupational History
- Social Support System
- Current Diagnosis
- Suicide Assessment (intent, plan, means)
- Mental Status
- Developmental History
- Substance Use History (Pimentel & Byrne, 2010).

Included in each defendant's treatment plan is a current diagnosis (axis 1-5), the initial course of treatment (see monthly treatment report (MTR) used by *Sharper Future* in Byrne et al., 2011, Appendix), and a brief narrative summary. The primary treatment modality recommended by *Sharper Future* is the group session, supplemented when needed by individual treatment, psychiatric consults, and other services (such as family and medical) as needed. Each month while on pretrial supervision, *Sharper Future* staff complete a monthly treatment report, where defendant progress in treatment is assessed and any changes in treatment are recorded.

Program Component 3: Support Group Sessions:

The vendor, *Sharper Future*, utilizes group therapy sessions—held weekly—as the primary treatment modality. In these group sessions, a variety of issues are addressed:

- Individual court issues
- Daily life stressors
- Learning new coping mechanisms for current situation
- Adaptation strategies in prison (e.g., identity manipulation techniques)
- Introduction of new group members
- Discussion of failures (e.g., technical violators)
- Employment options after incarceration

As we noted earlier, information related to the offense or other deviant behavior is prohibited from discussion during these weekly group sessions. Tom Tobin, one of the co-founders of *Sharper Future*, argues that “even without discussing alleged offenses...patients can use the group to get used to therapy and introspection, which will help them in the future. But one of the biggest benefits...is that defendants see others in the same situation as themselves, which helps reduce feelings of isolation” (Tobin, as quoted in Levine, 2008).

According to the facilitators we interviewed, the group's focus is on dealing with

the impact of arrest on defendants' daily lives. “Group sessions provide social contact for isolated defendants and support from others who are experiencing similar feelings. Defendants learn how to manage the stress of the federal judicial process in healthy ways. Defendants are taught how to eliminate their catastrophic thinking patterns (e.g., I will never find a job when released from prison; I will get killed in prison). Participants are educated about the Bureau of Prisons System. They learn about designation, facilities, communication with court and detention officers, and self-surrender procedures” (Byrne, Lurigio, & Pimentel, 2009:42). They are even coached on the use of basic identity manipulation techniques to use while in prison, so that other inmates will not know the nature of their conviction offense.

Taken together, it appears that what defendants are learning in these sessions may be resiliency. According to the recent review by Hoffer et al. (2010: 780),

Researchers believe an individual's resiliency—his degree of resourcefulness—is key to coping with stressors and thus avoiding suicide. People with greater resilience have protective factors, such as positive emotions, that ward off mental disorders like depression or anxiety and decrease vulnerability to suicide (Johnson et al., 2010). Therefore, resiliency may be the key component that enables child sex offenders who do not choose suicide to cope with the shame they experience as a result of the investigation.

While the group focus on strengthening resiliency certainly makes sense intuitively, there is no research currently available for review that assesses the effectiveness of this strategy. It is certainly possible that resiliency is a characteristic that a sex crime defendant brings into a group; it may not be amenable to change in group settings.

One assumption we made when we began this evaluation is that there is a new breed of defendants entering our federal court system: the typical sex crime defendant being charged in federal court has no prior record, a stable job, a family, and a good reputation in the community. When faced with the public disclosure of his activities, it certainly seems likely that he would be “at risk” for suicide, due to depression and/or anxiety. However, this does not appear to be the case. According to a review completed by *Sharper Future* (Chankin, Pimentel, & Sandoval, 2009). Initial Assessment of Suicide Risk among sex crime defendants reveals that the risk of suicide in this population appears low:

- 49 percent scored minimal on Beck's Depression Inventory,
- 58 percent scored minimal on Beck's Hopelessness Scale, and
- 44 percent scored minimal on Beck's Anxiety Inventory.

While a subgroup of the defendants referred to *Sharper Future* do have moderate or severe scores on each of these scales, these findings suggest that perhaps this group of sex crime defendants is more resilient—and at lower risk for suicide—than we anticipated. As part of our evaluation, we reviewed the initial assessment data provided by *Sharper Future*. Our assessment was consistent with the findings reported by the vendor, *Sharper Future*, and is described below:

On that basis of our review of the aggregate diagnostic data alone (no direct client contact, file reviews, further assessment, or other clinical information etc.), we draw the following definitive conclusions. First, the men in this sample suffer from a low prevalence of serious psychiatric disorders. More than one-fourth was given no diagnosis on Axis I, indicating that they currently met none of the diagnostic criteria for any of the clinical syndromes specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual.

Second, another 25 percent were diagnosed with an adjustment disorder, which is a transient condition in response to stressful life circumstances. We surmise that these diagnoses arose from clients' recent involvement in the criminal justice system and the uncertainty surrounding their pending court cases. Adjustment disorders, by definition, are contextually bound and likely to remit when the travail subsides. My observation regarding the source of the symptoms of adjustment disorder is overwhelmingly confirmed by the large number of clients who had entries on Axis IV, which shows that a significant percentage of the sample is experiencing psychosocial and environmental problems stemming from their embroilment in the legal system and corollaries thereof, such as marital estrangement, legal costs, and job loss.

Third, the most common diagnosis was major depression, which was diagnosed in approximately one-third of the defendants. A few of the cases appear to be in the moderate to severe range and require an immediate assessment of suicidality; the use of psychotropic medication might

be indicated in these instances. Hence, save for the handful of men with serious affective disorders, the most appropriate interventions with this group would focus on the acquisition of more effective coping skills. Anxiolytic medications could be prescribed for debilitating anxiety but should be dispensed only with great caution because of the safety of some classes of such medications as well as their potential for abuse and sales in a criminal justice setting. The data on Axis III are unremarkable, especially if this sample contained several andropausal men.

Fourth, the paucity of Axis II diagnoses is unusual in this population. We suspect that a thorough evaluation on personality dimensions or clusters was never undertaken because of the lack of clinical expertise or time. Further, given the short stay of pretrial populations and the intransigency of Axis II diagnoses, the neglect of this axis is understandable and warranted. Finally, the absence of any diagnoses of paraphilia is inexplicable as the sample consists of individuals who have been indicted for a sex offense. We suspect that because all of the members of the sample have such a diagnosis, none were listed. However, given the heterogeneity within the sex offender population, the nature of the diagnosis would be useful for the purpose of making decisions about future interventions and services (Lurigio, 2010, personal communication, as cited in Byrne et al., 2011).

The Role of the Pretrial Supervision Officer

The pretrial supervision officer (PSO) is responsible for supervising the sex crime defendant in the community. As part of this supervision process, a pretrial risk assessment is completed and reviewed, a substance abuse and mental health assessment is completed and reviewed, and targeted risk factors (e.g., other violence, computer-assisted crime) are identified. The PSO will also review the various conditions of release with the defendant.

The pretrial supervision officer (PSO) plays an important, linking-pin role in the *Sharper Future* program. It is the PSO's responsibility to monitor sex crime defendants in the community, and as part of this supervision process, the PSO may discuss individual defendants' progress in treatment. According to Roger Pimentel, who was a Central District PO, information sharing between the treatment

provider and pretrial services officers is critical at the pretrial stage, because treatment personnel will learn information about the defendant during individual/group sessions that may be used by the PSO to improve community supervision. Pimentel noted that information gleaned through discussions with facilitators from group treatment can be used to:

- Estimate defendants' performance in the community,
- Monitor interest in or susceptibility to continued risky behavior or sexual offending,
- Structure a defendant's time in the community (Pimentel & Byrne, 2010).

In addition to reviewing monthly reports charting defendant progress in treatment obtained from the vendor, *Sharper Future*, the PSO meets with the defendant and monitors compliance with the conditions of pretrial release. The Central District of California's suicide prevention program includes a combination of treatment and control components, and it is ongoing information sharing between the treatment provider, *Sharper Future*, and the pretrial supervision officers responsible for supervision and control that is the defining feature of this program. While the pretrial services officer may appear to be focused on formal social control, it is certainly possible that informal social control mechanisms are also at work here, based on the relationship that develops between the defendant and the pretrial services officer in the course of supervision (Byrne, 2009).

Our Evaluation: An Assessment of Implementation and Impact

The study utilized an exploratory, non-experimental research design, which is useful in providing a snapshot of one program, but does limit our ability to offer definitive assessments about the program's impact (Tusinski Miofsky & Byrne, 2011). We used this strategy for a variety of reasons, including the fact that this was a relatively new program in the early stages of development at one model site and the costs associated with using a more rigorous evaluation design (e.g., the collection and analysis of data at one or more comparison group sites). Using a non-experimental design, we first documented the operation of key program components, employing both qualitative and quantitative research strategies, and then examined the progress of a cohort of sex crime defendants through the *Sharper Future* program. We focused our evaluation on the implementation and preliminary impact of

the program on a cohort of sex crime defendants (n=52) that was placed on pretrial supervision and referred to the *Sharper Future* program between May, 2009, and February, 2010. We tracked the progress of these defendants in treatment, using data provided by the vendor in a monthly treatment report (MTR). While we believe our research design choice was appropriate, given the pragmatic considerations just outlined, we emphasize that without evaluation research findings using quasi-experimental or experimental research designs, we will not be able to determine "what works" in the area of pretrial treatment and supervision for sex crime defendants (Byrne, 2010; Byrne, Lurigio, & Pimentel, 2009). The current study was designed in part to spur interest in this research topic, leading to more rigorous research using larger samples and higher-level research designs (for a more complete discussion, see Byrne et al., 2011).

Data and Method

Our data collection strategy used a mixed method approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. A variety of data sources were examined during the course of our review. First, we requested data on the criminal history, current charges, and pretrial progress (e.g., violations, revocations, sentence, etc.) of each sex crime defendant referred to the *Sharper Future* program since its inception in 2006 (see Byrne et al., 2011, Appendix for a detailed listing of the PACTS data elements we examined). A total of 103 sex crime defendants were identified. The offender profile, charge summary, criminal history, and court processing data included in this evaluation are based on *all* sex crime defendants referred to the program since its inception in 2006. While we considered limiting our analyses of these data to the subgroup of sex crime defendants (n=52) that were in the *Sharper Future* program at the time of our review (May 2009–February 2010), we decided to present the findings on criminal history, charge type, and pretrial arrest using the total population (n=103); separate analyses (not shown) of these data using the smaller subsample would not change the substantive findings reported here. It is our view that in this type of preliminary review, we should use the data—all of it—available for review.

In addition to pretrial data, we were given access to the monthly tracking reports (MTRs) submitted by the treatment provider, *Sharper Future*, to pretrial services each month. These records included information on the mental

health status of each defendant, the types of treatment provided, significant issues being addressed, current diagnosis, the defendants' progress in treatment, and a narrative summary by a *Sharper Future* staff member (see the sample MTR included in the appendix). A total of 225 monthly treatment reports were included in our review, allowing us to examine *staff members' perceptions* of the progress in treatment of the 52 sex crime defendants referred to the *Sharper Future* program between May, 2009 and February, 2010. A detailed breakdown of the length of time sex crime defendants spent in group sessions (based on completed MTRs) is included below.

We supplemented our secondary analyses of pretrial and vendor databases with an analysis of qualitative data that we collected through structured observation and interviews (see Appendix of our final report for a sample interview and observation guide). We collected data on the treatment and supervision components of the program by interviewing pretrial probation and *Sharper Future* treatment providers about the key components of the suicide prevention program. We also asked staff members to offer their perceptions of the program's design and implementation. We then observed group sessions "in action" using a noninvasive observation strategy (we observed the sessions through a two-way mirror), designed to minimize the intrusiveness of the observer and to maximize human subject protections. At the group session, sex crime defendants were made aware of the presence of the observer by the group facilitator, and they agreed to allow the observation.

Qualitative Review: Group Sessions and Interviews with Program Staff

The following description of a typical group session for pretrial sex crime defendants is based on observation of *Sharper Future's* group therapy sessions, brief discussion with participants about the sessions, and interviews with group therapy session facilitators, conducted in the spring of 2010.

The Group Session

The first group session we observed started promptly. It consisted of nine sex offender participants, the facilitator, and the facilitator's assistant. The facilitator started out by explaining the goals of the group session. He also explained that an observer from a research project would be in attendance in the next room and would be viewing the session through a two-way mirror area. The facilitator explained that none of the participants in the session would be identified in any reports emanating from the researcher's observation of the session. None of the group members raised questions about the observer, and the session commenced. In terms of human subjects protections associated with this type of unobtrusive observation strategy, the treatment provider, *Sharper Future*, followed appropriate procedures by gaining informed consent from group session participants in this manner. The *Sharper Future* program has a human subjects protection protocol in place when group sessions are observed; if a group member expressed discomfort to the facilitator, then the observer would not be allowed

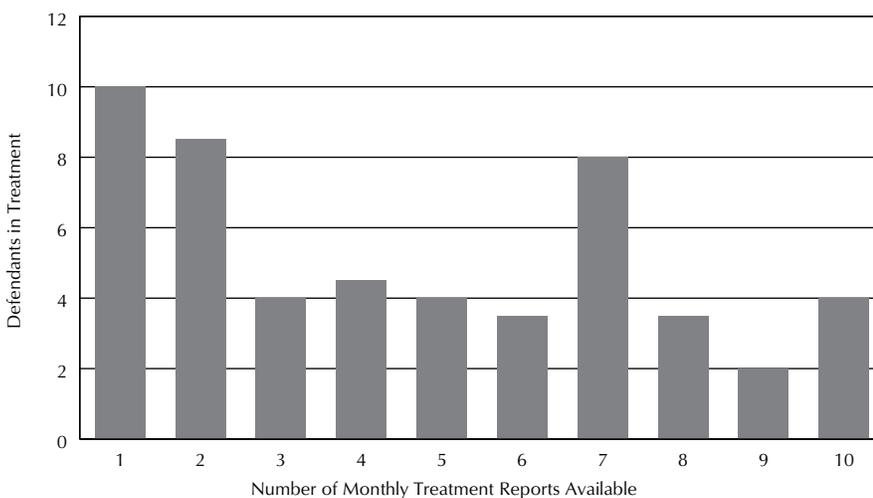
access to the session (for a full discussion, see Byrne et al., 2011).

At the beginning of the session, the facilitator announced to the group the purpose and goals of the session. The basic goals were stated as gathering the participants together to exchange information on their personal situations that could, in some way, help each other with their problems. The facilitator stressed that this session, as with other sessions, would represent part of the helping process that the participants should be familiar with from their experience with previous sessions. The atmosphere appeared to be welcoming to all of the participants. In general, the session was very open. The facilitator opened by inviting the participants to talk about any new problems they may have encountered since the previous session. The first respondent to the facilitator's request about this problem said that he was having a problem with his wife threatening to file divorce. He indicated, in fairly graphic terms, that his wife had come to him sobbing, stating that he had ruined her life and the lives of their children by his acts. He continued that he believed the wife was being unduly influenced by her relatives. He asserted that the relatives had encouraged his wife to leave him, characterizing him as a "monster." The participant was fearful that his wife would get "everything" in a divorce decision because of his history. The participant stated that he was in a great state of anxiety because he did not know what the future would bring.

After participant number one finished his statements to the group, the facilitator solicited advice from each of the other participants. One respondent observed that participant number one was having a problem with accepting the fact that his actions had negatively affected his wife and his children. This respondent empathized with participant number one's situation and felt that he had a formidable struggle ahead of him. One of the other respondents stressed the theme of seeking a compromise with his wife but making sure that in doing so he would protect his own financial interests. This respondent stated that that protection should extend toward their children. The facilitator took the situation and reflected upon it precisely and objectively. The facilitator drew out the rest of the group by asking them how they could relate to this situation. Every one of the other participants was able to verbally relate to their own personal experiences, describing similar circumstances with either their spouses or their significant others.

FIGURE 1.

Sex Crime Defendants in Treatment



An interesting part of this process was the facilitator's reliance on his assistant, who was female. This assistant gave a fleshed-out perspective of what the wife was probably feeling. She stressed the possible fears for the future that the wife might have. These could include adequate care for their children, their children's views of the plight of the husband and the family in general, and the reputations of the children in the family. The facilitator added that the participants should pay great heed to this viewpoint, for without doing so they could fall victim to being consumed by only one perspective: the perspective of themselves as victims. The facilitator emphasized that the participants all be mindful of the fact that it was their actions that had put them into such family conflicts. The facilitator reminded the participants that they must constantly be aware of the perspectives of others as they struggle to get their lives back.

These statements seemed to draw out another member of the group. This particular participant was in his 70s. He described a very different situation with his wife. He stated that he and his wife have been married for 44 years. He recounted his feelings of being treated unfairly by the system, but nevertheless did not lose sight of the fact that he alone had put himself in this predicament. He ended his reflection by stating that the stress had been terrible but would have been unbearable if it had not been for his wife's support throughout all of this. He announced to the group that he was saying this to show the other side; the side of a situation in which the "significant other" provides invaluable support through the most trying of times. He stated that it was hard for him to comprehend what participant number one must be going through. Given that he considered himself lucky, this participant offered all the help he could give participant one in this very difficult time.

Throughout this whole first part of the session, the atmosphere was very open. Each and every participant seemed to have something to say about how they felt about what participant one and participant two had said about their personal experiences and how the commission of their crimes had changed their lives. Some of the participants reflected upon the support offered by the second participant's wife. Several other participants stated that they wished they had someone like that supporting them. They stated that such support would make a big difference in how they handled some of their problems. Two of the participants stressed that participation in the

group, although not an exact substitute for the support of a dedicated loved one, came close to this type of support. One other participant expressed that presently he is going through a period of depression in which he only gets 3 to 4 hours of sleep every night. He added that without the participation in the help group, he would be in a much worse state. He said that at least the group allowed him to "cope" with his present problems. He wondered aloud how he would get along without his participation. He stated that he did not want to think about that.

As the session progressed to the halfway point, the facilitator began to draw out each participant by asking them how they had been progressing since the last session. The facilitator asked one participant if he had been coping better now as opposed to when he first started these sessions. The participant responded by saying that he does not feel "alone" anymore. He stated that exchanging information on individual experiences within the group had helped him enormously. He also added that because of the participation in the group, he has not let his criminal act define who he is. According to this participant, the exchanges in the group sessions have allowed him to move on with his life and gauge where he is. He stated that the experiences have allowed him to calibrate where he is in regard to what others in the group are experiencing and how they are handling their problems. It has allowed him to reflect upon how bad his situation is, but has also permitted him to recognize that others may have it worse.

Another participant related a very positive experience. He talked about how he had found what he considered the "right woman," and had started a relationship with her that he wanted to continue. He described how he had obsessed about how he would reveal to her that he had been convicted of a sex offense. His fears were allayed when he finally gathered the courage to break this news to her and she responded by saying that she accepted this as part of his past. The positive response the other participants had to this participant's description was palpable. The facilitator underscored that this was a "success story" demonstrating that there was always hope that one could start a new life. (During this period of the session this researcher observed a visible sigh of relief from participant number one. It was the only time he smiled during the session).

The facilitator ended the session by covering two areas that he believed were very important. The first was a short discussion about the difficulties that the participants

might experience in trying to lead a legitimate life in light of the "bombardment" by the media of anything of a sexual nature. The facilitator spoke about our present culture in the United States, and how it may often seem that the culture itself is obsessed with sex. He talked about how sex is presented in commercials and elsewhere every day, in seemingly benign situations. He related this to cultural differences between male and female roles in our society and the differences between how males and females typically react to depictions of sexual matters or sexual undercurrents in the media. He pointed out that there is no escaping from this culture, so it is critical that each person intelligently conclude how to deal with it.

The second topic area covered in the group session—which was covered more extensively and appeared to resonate very clearly with the participants—was the subject of entering prison and what they might expect once they get there. This subject was the one foremost on the minds of the participants, as evidenced by their responses. The facilitator described the types of prisons in which they could probably be expected to be incarcerated. He spent a great deal of time on the issue of being "outed" in prison. He gave specific advice to the participants on how to keep secret the sexual offenses they committed. He emphasized that they had a choice in prison; they could opt for isolation or they could be allowed in the general population of the prison. If they decided that they would opt for inclusion in the general population, the facilitator advised them to have an "ironclad" cover story. He stressed that this is "rule number one" in survival skills for them in the prison population. He indicated that if they take a cover story of something like being a tax evader, they would have to educate themselves extensively about tax evasion and tax evasion laws before they even enter the prison. The facilitator advised them that they could expect to be tested on the truth of their assertions. One of the respondents expressed some anxiety about this strategy. He offered a scenario in which, after being tested, a prison inmate might ask his wife during a prison visit to check the validity of the cover story on the Internet. The facilitator said that there was no way to prevent something like this; it was a risk one would have to take or face being "low man on the totem pole" in the prison population.

The Role of the Facilitator

In the session described above, the facilitator created and sustained a very open, responsive, and reflective group activity. Throughout the

session, the facilitator was very accepting and not at all judgmental. It was apparent that the facilitator was quite cognizant of what the participants were feeling and was careful to reflect upon their descriptions so that other participants could be drawn into a substantive discussion. A constant theme of the session was that the participants acknowledge the problems they are experiencing without placing blame on others. The facilitator often brought the participants back to the fact that they were responsible for the actions that have brought them to the point where they are going to prison.

In a discussion with the facilitator after the session ended, he reiterated that he always makes sure that the offenders in the groups do not try to shirk the responsibility of their actions. In particular, he makes sure that they do not play the role of victim. If he senses that they do, he brings them back to the original offense and reestablishes who the victim of that offense really was. The facilitator indicated that, in almost all cases he observed, the participants will ultimately accept responsibility within the group. In effect, the facilitator's comments on this will force the participants to catch themselves and avoid any additional comments that might portray them as victims.

When asked if the facilitator had ever experienced problems of nonparticipation or confrontational participation in the group, the facilitator responded that he rarely experienced this but knew how to handle these situations if they did occur. In particular, the facilitator described incidents in which new members of the group would interrupt others before they were finished describing their experiences. In these cases the facilitator said that he would remind these new members of the "ground rules" of the group, which are short and finite but clear. He said that once he had done this he would have no further problems with participants. He has never experienced any incorrigibility within the group that would need to be addressed in any penalizing way. The facilitator portrayed the group therapy experience as a helpful one for all participants. He also emphasized the importance of the unique collaboration of law enforcement with psychological therapy to reach a positive end. Even though his personal opinion is more treatment based, he feels strongly that the program has been able to successfully merge both treatment-based and penalty-based philosophies in an effort to reduce anxiety, depression, and the risk of suicide attempts among the sex offenders who are participating in the program.

Clients' Perceptions of the Sessions

After the end of the session, an informal discussion session took place with the facilitator and four participants. Each was very supportive of the sessions. One referred to the sessions as an "emotional oasis." Another participant expressed himself by saying that he was not sure where he would be without these sessions. He stated that many times he would feel that everyone was "against him." He stated that he understood why others would feel that way. Sometimes, he said, he felt that way too. But coming to the sessions allowed him to pull himself up from the belief that "all was lost." In these sessions, he could express himself to others who were "in the same boat." According to this sex crime defendant, this alone had an important effect on whether or not he wanted to continue living.

While these comments are anecdotal, they do provide some context for the group session under review. Unfortunately, a detailed assessment of sex crime defendants' perception of the *Sharper Future* program was beyond the scope of our review. However, this line of inquiry represents an important avenue for future research, assuming the requisite human subjects protections are put in place (Ward and Salmon, 2011).

Facilitators' Perceptions of Group Sessions

Our observations of the group session strategy employed by *Sharper Future* were supplemented by additional interviews with two therapist facilitators. The interviews consisted of additional questions about the facilitation of group therapy sessions (see interview schedule in appendix of our final report). Both facilitators pointed out that facilitation of the sessions depended upon the ability to get participants to talk about their emotions and personal feelings. In effect, this is a process that supports an ongoing self-assessment of emotions. Both therapists stressed that all of the therapy sessions are similar in structure, and must be so for consistency sake. Both facilitators agreed that the style of facilitation must be similar from one group to the next. The structure is basically the same, although the content of the sessions can differ.

Both facilitators were asked how they would characterize a successful session. Once again, they were in agreement. They said that a successful session is one in which interaction is "high." In essence, the sessions must be "open." One of the facilitators stated that the degree of openness is positively associated with the

degree of interaction. High interaction makes each individual session successful. In addition, the level of trust between participants and the facilitator must be high. That is not to say that there are not times when the facilitators are tested. One facilitator said that sometimes it is like "pulling teeth to get them going." It is also important for the facilitator to recognize that the participants change over time. It is the job of the facilitator to influence that change to instill greater trust and openness.

We pointed out that in the beginning some participants can come off as "anti-government." In these cases it is the job of the facilitator to curtail the tendency to vent in these sessions. This is part of the tough task of the facilitator to get the participants to release themselves from the belief that they are victims. The facilitators agreed that one sign of success was the indication that the participants were looking forward to coming back to successive sessions. One of the facilitators reported that the greatest obstacle is the sense of shame. This facilitator pointed out that the offenders participating in the group sessions were experiencing rejection at all quarters. They had lost their status in society. They had lost their jobs. In some cases, they had lost their families. The facilitator also mentioned that most of the offenders participating in the group sessions had absolutely no history of criminal offenses, which in his opinion was critical. He believed that the participants in the sessions had gone from an acceptable/honorable status in society to an extremely low status. This facilitator stressed the role of the Internet for the group participants, arguing that most of the alleged offenses committed by the offenders were Internet-driven. If the defendants had not had access to the Internet, he believed that a significant number of them would not have been tempted to commit their crimes. He emphasized that technology in the form of Internet access and pressures put upon the offenders through the media's depiction of sexuality were important factors in the commission of their offenses.

Both facilitators were asked to describe the general objectives of the group therapy sessions. One facilitator stated emphatically that the goal of the sessions was to prevent the offenders from "killing themselves." The other facilitator agreed and added that the goal of the sessions was to ingrain in the participants that their offense was not a "life-ending event." Both stated that the facilitator must consistently remind the participants that there is a life beyond the offense they

committed. Despite the rejection that these defendants have experienced from loved ones and society in general, it was the goal of the facilitators to encourage the participants to rise above the temptations to give in to the pressures put upon them by their own actions. The facilitators stated that the first hurdle is to get the participants to march past the elements causing their depression and then to prepare themselves for what to expect in prison. The formula in the sessions was simple. It is to open discussions to the group, to find out what is new in their lives, to bring up new topics of concern, and to address anxieties that they may have about the future.

Quantitative Review: An Assessment of Implementation and Impact

In the following section, we have highlighted the key findings from our study, including (a) our review of the sex crime defendants' profile data (demographic, charge, and criminal history), (b) examination of available client data on initial mental health assessment and progress in treatment, and (c) preliminary review of the impact of the program on the traditional outcomes associated with pretrial release: failure to appear and new criminal activity. Due to space limitations, findings related to the impact of the program on the mental health status of sex crime defendants are only briefly discussed, but we urge the reader to read the full evaluation report (Byrne et al., 2011).

Sex Crime Defendant Profile

We examined the racial/ethnic composition of individuals charged with sex offenses since the start of the *Sharper Future* program in 2006. Non-Latino whites comprise the largest share of this sample, accounting for over two-thirds of the members of the sample. Latinos represent nearly a quarter of the sample, followed by non-Latino blacks and Asians. What is interesting about this pattern is that each of the minority groups is underrepresented in the sample, and this is particularly true for Latinos and Asians. According to recent census estimates provided in the American Community Survey (ACS), Latinos and Asians are 47.3 percent and 12.8 percent of the population in Los Angeles County, respectively.¹ Conversely, non-Latino whites are over-represented in

these data at over twice their proportion in the broader population (29 percent compared to 67 percent).

The study sample is exclusively made up of males. The average age of the sampled individuals is 44 years old, with a range of 54 years (from 22 to 76 years). There are notable differences in the average across the primary racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, the average age for non-Latino whites was older than the overall average (48 years), whereas that for both non-Latino blacks and Latinos was less than the average (41 years and 34 years, respectively). As may be expected, the age range also varies across groups, with that for non-Latino blacks and Latinos being somewhat more truncated than for whites (52 years for whites compared to 28 years for blacks and 34 years for Latinos). The differences in average age by racial/ethnic group correspond to those found in Los Angeles County more generally, where recent census data report that non-Latino whites have the highest median age (44 years) and Latinos the lowest (28 years).

These data also indicate a high degree of homogeneity regarding citizenship, with an overwhelming majority of the individuals in our sample holding American citizenship (92 percent). All of those who are not American citizens are Latino (N=7). It is important to keep in mind that the immigration status of these individuals was not specified in the data, so it is not possible to designate whether the non-citizens in our sample are undocumented immigrants. However, the data do suggest that citizens are much more likely to be charged for sex offenses than those not holding American citizenship.

We examined the types of charges alleged to have been committed by the sex crime defendants in our sample. Possessing (including distributing) child pornography was the most common offense for which individuals in this sample were charged. Charges include child pornography (n=82; 80 percent), sexual exploitation of minors (n=10; 10 percent), coercion or enticement of minors (n=7; 6 percent) and other sex offenses (n=4; 4 percent), including transfer of obscene material to minors (n=2), abusive sexual contact without permission (n=1), and other sex offense (n=1). While the majority of these alleged offenses involved noncontact crimes, we were told that in a number of these cases the defendant was also believed to be involved in contact-related sexual activities. We should emphasize that we have seen no data corroborating these claims; more to the point, very few of the defendants

in our sample were charged with sexual contact-related offenses.

We also examined the prior criminal history of the defendants in our sample. We examined both prior arrest and prior conviction data for the sex crime defendants with data provided by the federal pretrial system. Approximately 20 percent of our sample had a prior conviction (20/103), but only 6 of these convictions were for felonies (2 drug, 4 violence-related). In addition, 36 percent of our sample had at least one prior arrest (37/103); 17 defendants had a prior misdemeanor arrest, 8 defendants had both a felony and a misdemeanor arrest, and 12 had a prior arrest for a felony. As a group, these defendants do not have a previous history of sex crime arrests or convictions. However, about 10 percent of the sample (11/103) includes defendants with a prior conviction involving violence of some kind (4 felony conviction; 7 misdemeanor convictions).

Below is a profile of our study sample, based on our review of the available data from the federal pretrial database, supplemented with data from *Sharper Future's* database. One caveat is in order: we did not conduct an assessment of pretrial risk assessment data; we relied instead on estimates provided by the pretrial program (see Byrne, Lurigio, and Pimentel, 2009; Pimentel and Byrne, 2010).

FIGURE 2.

Profile of Sex Crime Defendants in California's Central District

- **Charges include child pornography (80%)**, sexual exploitation of minors (10%), coercion or enticement of minors (6%), and other sex offenses (4%)
- **Overall, criminal histories are minor**, but about 10% have prior felony arrests and an additional 20% have a prior misdemeanor arrest.
- **Mental health histories are minimal**, but 10% are classified as severe, using standard assessment tools.
- **Pretrial risk assessment** indicates that most are low-risk offenders, using traditional outcome measures (re-arrest, failure to appear).
- Given this risk profile, the **detention rate** for sex crime defendants is high (over 50%).

Source: Pimentel and Byrne (2010)

¹ http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US06037&-qr_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_DP3YR5&-context=adp&-ds_name=&-tree_id=3308&-_lang=en&redoLog=false&-format=

Among individuals for whom conviction information was available at the time of our review (n=48), we see that nearly 92 percent of those convicted sex offenders were incarcerated. The average sentence length for these offenders was approximately 4 years (45.5 months). In addition, as part of their sentences, these individuals also were to remain under supervision of the criminal justice system for various lengths of time. The average time of post-release monitoring for this group of offenders was approximately 9 years (101.7 months). The small group of offenders who were convicted but not incarcerated (roughly 8 percent of those convicted) received monitoring as a component of their sentence. The duration of the supervisory period was shorter than for the former group, averaging just over 4 years (49.5 months). For nearly a quarter (22.9 percent) of the convicted offenders, payment of a fine was mandated by the court. The average fine was just under ten thousand dollars (\$9,955). It was much less common for sentenced individuals to be ordered to pay restitution. In only two of the cases in our data was such a requirement imposed, at a cost of over \$13,000.

The Implementation and Impact of Suicide Risk Reduction Strategies on the Mental Health Status of Sex Crime Defendants

In order to determine the level of implementation and impact of the *Sharper Future* suicide prevention program, we collected and analyzed data from the *Sharper Future* database. To minimize the intrusiveness of the evaluation, we limited our review to a secondary analysis of existing data. Our primary data source for this review was the Pretrial Services Monthly Treatment Report (MTR), which *Sharper Future* staff use to track service provision and defendant progress in the program. When access to data was not possible (in cases such as the initial suicide risk assessment and the various mental health assessment tools utilized by staff), we relied on available agency reports and presentations that summarized the findings from these assessments (see, e.g., Chankin, Pimentel, & Sandoval, 2009). The key findings from this review are briefly summarized in Table 1, but for a complete discussion and review, see our evaluation (Byrne et al., 2011).

TABLE 1.

Key Study Findings: Implementation

- ▶ **Mental Health History:** Mental health histories were minimal, but 10 percent (of our treatment subgroup) was classified as severe using standard assessment tools.
- ▶ **Pretrial Risk Assessment:** most sex crime defendants were classified as *low-risk* offenders, using traditional outcome measures (re-arrest, failure to appear). Given this risk profile, the detention rate for sex crime defendants appears high (over 50 percent), but in line with national detention estimates for this group.
- ▶ **Program Capacity:** Program began in 2006 with only two sex crime defendants, but by the end of our review (February, 2010) there were 42 sex crime defendants in the program, with four different groups meeting regularly. The number of active cases in a given month during our review period ranged from 19 to 27 (total in review sample=52).
- ▶ **Sharper Future Program Implementation:** The level of program implementation was found to be high in terms of treatment participation, based on data provided by the vendor, *Sharper Future*. **Attendance:** The percentage of defendants attending group sessions on a regular basis ranged from 50 to 70 percent across the months we reviewed.
- ▶ **Pretrial Supervision Program Implementation:** data were not examined on the supervision practices of the FPO, so no assessment of the level of implementation of the pretrial component can be offered.

Key Study Findings: Impact

- ▶ **Findings-Defendant Progress/Change:** Sex crime defendant improvement during treatment was examined using data included in the monthly treatment reports provided by the vendor, *Sharper Future*. Significant improvement in the functioning of participants over time was difficult to document using available MTR data. We examined the following dimensions identified in the monthly treatment narrative and/or ranked by *Sharper Future* staff: group process goals, trust, dysfunction, and overall impact.
- ▶ **Progress:** Defendant progress in meeting group process, trust, and dysfunction goals in sessions was listed as moderate or higher (most, complete) for the majority of defendants (n=52) in monthly reviews by project staff.
- ▶ **Change:** Initial Defendant improvement in each of the four assessment areas during group treatment (month one vs. month two comparisons) was not found. Based on our review of MTRs completed by staff, "No change" in each of the progress goals was the modal response. However, this finding needs to be viewed in the context of the moderate and higher assessments of defendant progress in these areas in month one.
- ▶ **Optimal Time:** Due to small sample size, longer-term comparisons (e.g., month one vs. month six in treatment (n=20)) could not be used here. However, these analyses are critical to an assessment of the optimal time in treatment.

Pretrial Supervision, Technical Violations and Pretrial Crime

Although we collected no data on the quantity and quality of federal pretrial supervision in the Central District of California, we recognize the importance of this line of inquiry. Unfortunately, time and cost constraints limited our ability to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of *both* supervision and treatment. For the purposes of our evaluation, we examined the two primary outcomes of interest to pretrial decision makers: (1) Did the defendant appear as scheduled in subsequent court proceedings? and (2) Did the defendant get arrested while under federal pretrial supervision?

While overall compliance with conditions of pretrial release was high (91 percent), several defendants (10/104, or 9 percent) were found

to have violated one or more of their pretrial release conditions and were remanded. Types of violations included the following:

- Defendant did not follow program rules at a halfway house and was discharged unsuccessfully and returned to custody
- Two defendants were found in possession of new child pornography and returned to custody
- Defendant had substance abuse issues, conditions were modified following violations, and defendant continued in the community
- Defendant was accessing adult pornography in violation of computer monitoring conditions, release conditions were modified, and defendant continued in the community

- Two defendants were found loitering in a park and returned to custody
- Defendant violated his curfew and was remanded for sentence, earlier than scheduled
- Defendant was associating with minors by working as D.J. at a teenager-oriented dance and was returned to custody

In addition to examining technical violations that were identified during a defendant's pretrial supervision period, we also tracked defendants' failure to appear rates and any new crime commission. Our review revealed the following:

- **New Arrests:** Only two of 104 defendants were arrested for new crimes—both misdemeanors—during our review period (May 2009 to February 2010).
- **Failure to Appear:** All defendants appeared in court as required during our review period.

Given the overall low-risk profile of sex crime defendants, the above findings are not surprising, and support the view that low-risk sex crime defendants can be released safely into the community.

Limitations of Study

The most critical outcome reported in our study was the fact that no program participants have committed suicide. However, the base rate for suicide among pretrial sex crime defendants was *already* very low (i.e., four known suicides of sex crime defendants in the Central District of California in 2004–2005); thus, the measurement of a district-level suicide *risk reduction* effect among a specific subgroup of defendants in a single court is quite difficult to achieve. In this jurisdiction, you would be comparing a rate based on four suicide cases (over an unknown number of sex defendant releasees during this period) to no suicide cases (over 103 cases during a five-year post-test period). This is a problem in all research on the impact of suicide prevention strategies on subsequent suicide. To address this low base-rate problem, researchers typically combine the suicide outcome with other indicators of self-harm and mental health (for an overview, see Perry et al.). We did not attempt to collect these types of outcome data ourselves; we relied instead on a secondary analysis of monthly progress reports, which essentially amounts to an assessment of staff perceptions of defendants' progress in treatment. This caveat aside, we believe that examining the MTR data does provide

useful, albeit limited, measures of defendant progress in treatment. The current study has several other limitations—small sample size, weak research design, low base rate, no independent external assessment measures—that make it impossible to offer definitive findings regarding the effectiveness of the suicide prevention program under review. However, our study does provide a preliminary examination of the implementation and impact of a novel approach to suicide prevention in an emerging federal pretrial population: sex crime defendants.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our study has provided preliminary support for the strategy developed in the Central District of California to address the potential problem of suicide by sex crime defendants. Individuals charged with federal sex crimes, including Internet-facilitated crimes involving child pornography and the solicitation of minors for sex, are often new to the justice system, with relatively minor previous involvement in the criminal justice system, based on such indicators as prior arrests and convictions. Because their alleged crimes are viewed by the public as heinous in nature, it has been theorized that sex crime defendants—due in large part to the shame and humiliation associated with public disclosure—are “at risk” for suicide during the period of time between initial arrest, formal arraignment, and final case disposition (Perry et al., 2010). It has also been theorized that *resiliency* (or lack of it) is a factor that appears to distinguish sex crime defendants who attempt suicide from those sex crime defendants that do not (Hoffer et al., 2010).

The suicide prevention program developed by the vendor *Sharper Future*, in partnership with the federal pretrial office, the public defender's office, and other key decision makers in the Central District of California, has been designed to address these potential suicide stressors in a group treatment setting. The Central District program represents a unique approach to suicide prevention at the pretrial stage of the federal court process, in that the treatment modality—the group—focuses on offender adjustment, coping, and change without open discussion of the alleged sex crime charges under court review. The curriculum (cognitive behavioral) is grounded in the best practice research literature (see, e.g., Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, & Hodgson, 2009), but also recognizes the “Importance of therapist and therapy (process) factors in producing good outcomes with sex offenders”

(Ward and Salmon, 2011: 402). In our view, this program was designed and implemented based on a shared belief that the federal court system has an ethical responsibility to protect alleged offenders—even sex offenders—from self-harm (Ward and Salmon, 2011).

The findings we report here are preliminary, given the non-experimental study design, small sample size, and measurement/instrumentation limitations we highlighted earlier. However, the positive findings we report about level of program implementation and the generally positive impact of the program on defendants' daily functioning, awareness, trust, and self-regulation are worthy of careful consideration. We recommend that this program be evaluated more rigorously, using the type of high-quality evaluation design (level 3 or higher) required for inclusion in a systematic, evidence-based review (i.e., quasi-experiments or experimental design). Until this research is completed, definitive conclusions about “what works” in the area of pretrial suicide prevention cannot be offered. In the following section, we offer a brief agenda for research and program development at the pretrial stage, based on the major findings from our review and evaluation.

Evaluation Research:

This study highlights the implementation and impact of one possible approach to the problem of suicide by sex crime defendants. Follow-up evaluation is needed using a more rigorous research design, larger sample, and improved data collection protocol, including independent, external assessments of defendants' mental health status and quantity and quality of pretrial supervision. Research using an experimental design is preferable, with random assignment to treatment and control groups, and independent assessment of changes in the mental health of sex crime defendants.

Basic Prevalence Research:

Baseline data on the extent of the suicide problem among *all* categories of pretrial defendants needs to be collected and analyzed (Byrne, Pattavina, & Lurigio, 2012). Until this research is completed, we simply will not know the nature and extent of the suicide problem for defendants under federal pretrial supervision. In addition, suicide attempt/completion data need to be collected on a cohort of jail defendants, focusing initially on sex crime defendants. Examination of these data will allow researchers to address two important questions: (1) Do sex crime defendants have

a greater risk of suicide/self-harm than other pretrial detainees?, and (2) Does the pretrial detention decision affect the subsequent risk of suicide among sex crime defendants?

Policy and Practice Recommendations:

Based on the preliminary research study findings presented here, it seems safe to assume that several other pretrial jurisdictions across the country will be interested in learning more about the Central District of California's suicide prevention program. For this reason, we recommend that the *Sharper Future* program develop and prepare a model program description for dissemination in the near future. While the results of our review of initial mental health assessment data revealed that the majority of sex crime defendants had only minor mental health problems, even small numbers of suicides are problematic. Given the documented poor performance of suicide prediction instruments, the current practice of referring all sex crime defendants to the *Sharper Future* program for assessment and treatment appears to be justified; by design, it minimizes the false negatives problem (i.e., assuming a defendant is not a suicide risk when in fact he is). Finally, it would seem reasonable to propose that we examine suicide risk among the entire federal pretrial population, and to consider the implementation and evaluation of a new generation of risk reduction strategies incorporating suicide risk in assessment systems currently focused on the narrower issue of appearance and new criminal behavior.

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