



# Reducing Recidivism in Sexual Offenders

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## Introduction

- Sexual violence is a severe public health problem. 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual violence in their lives (CDC, 2018).
- Sexual abuse is correlated to psychiatric disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, PTSD, sleep disorders, and suicide attempts (Chen et. al, 2010). Some victims experience many mental health issues as well as physical health issues from their trauma.
- The mean rate of sexual recidivism for convicted sex offenders is believed to be between 10% and 15% over 5 years, and 13.7% over 5 to 6 years (Moster, Wnuk, & Jeglic, 2008).

## Research Question

What is the most effective intervention to reduce recidivism in sex offenders?

## Recommended Intervention

### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- “CBT is a cluster of interventions to address presumed dysfunctional thought processes that mediate a precipitating event and otherwise harmful behavioral responses to the event” (Mpofu et al., 2006).
- Cognitive behavioral therapy is delivered by cognitive behavioral therapists or CBT practitioners.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy helps clients obtain skills in learning how to identify thoughts, behaviors, and how to solve problems (Moster, Wnuk, & Jeglic, 2008).
- Cognitive behavioral therapy can be delivered in an individual and/or group setting.

## Alternative Interventions

### Surgical Castration

- Surgical castration is the removal of testes (Rice & Harris, 2011).
- Surgical castration does not appear to have enough research to determine its effectiveness and the treatment also seems unethical (Kim, Benekos, & Merlo, 2016).

### Pharmacological Intervention

- Includes hormone treatments such as androgen deprivation therapy (ADT) that is used to lower testosterone levels (Rice & Harris, 2011).
- Seven studies provided weak evidence and do not make strong determinations in using pharmacological drugs as effective interventions to lower recidivism (Khan et al., 2015).

## Methods

A systematic search of the literature was conducted.

### Databases:

- PsychINFO
- Cochrane Library
- Academic Search Complete

### Search Terms:

- Sex Offenders OR Sexual Offenders OR Sexual Predators
- intervention OR Therapy OR Treatment
- Recidivism OR Reoffending OR Repeat Offenders

### Criteria Included:

- Peer Reviewed
- Academic Journals
- Participants in the study were Sex Offenders or Sexual Offenders

## Rationale for Recommended Intervention

- Cognitive behavioral therapy for sex offenders typically consists of specific components that indicate the treatment of cognitive distortions, the cultivation of empathy and social skills, and the application of emotion management and relapse prevention (Moster, Wnuk, & Jeglic, 2008).
- Throughout treatment, sex offenders are able to get feedback from other group members to help develop the skills they need (Moster et al., 2008).
- Among ten identified studies, for the cognitive behavioral therapy group, there were lower rates of sexual recidivism (10.25% compared to 17.67% with the comparison group), lower rates of violent recidivism (21.1% compared to 32.6% with the comparison group), and lower rates of general recidivism (27.05% compared to 51.05% with the comparison group) (Mpofu et al., 2006).

## Conclusion

- Although not all sexual violence occurs from reoffending and often goes unreported, sexual violence may be reduced with treatment for sex offenders.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy appears to be an effective intervention in reducing recidivism among sexual offenders but further research is needed.
- Reducing recidivism among sex offenders will create safer communities and decrease rates of revictimization.

