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Study Finds Reentry Program for Sex Offenders Effective

Sex offenders can stir up a lot of fear and anger in a community. But an innovative program from the Department of Corrections (DOC) is preventing new crimes by matching a sex offender about to be released from prison with a group of four to seven volunteer mentors, according to a study that will be published in [*Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*](#).

The study found that participants in the [Minnesota Circles of Support and Accountability \(MnCoSA\)](#) program were 84 percent less likely to return to prison.

“Research tells us we can increase public safety by connecting offenders with employment, housing, treatment and other resources as they reenter the community,” said Grant Duwe, research director for the DOC. “This program takes that idea a step further by connecting a sex offender with a group of people who can provide that social support, even before he leaves prison.”

The DOC started MnCoSA in 2008 to work with level 2 sex offenders – those at moderate risk to reoffend. The mentors receive training and continuous support from DOC staff and professionals in law enforcement, mental health and other areas.

“MnCoSA is about community members coming together to reduce the risk of future sexual victimization,” said JoAnn Jones, director of the MnCoSA program.

Because the program relies on volunteers, it also produces cost savings for taxpayers. The study found that, for every dollar spent on MnCoSA, the program has generated a benefit of \$1.82.

“MnCoSA is a great example of the department’s commitment to best practices,” said Commissioner Tom Roy. “We need to make sure we’re using our limited resources on programs that have proven to be effective.”

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Read the [full report](#) or a [research in brief](#) summary.