

## Training

Volunteers receive 15 hours\* of professional training from subject matter experts as well as continuous support from DOC staff.

### Topics include:

- Circle Process and Guidelines
- Criminal Justice System Overview
- Human Sexuality and Sexual Deviance
- Risk Level Assessment/Assignment
- Survivor Perspective
- Offender Perspective
- Sex Offender and Chemical Dependency Treatment
- Boundaries and Self-Care
- Institution Orientation
- Supervision and Agent/Offender Relationships
- Suicide Prevention/Crisis Intervention
- Victim Assistance/Restorative Justice Overview
- Cultural Competency/Trauma Awareness

Training is free and located at the DOC Central Office in St. Paul. Parking is free and the building is located near transit routes.

\*More training will be provided as needed and/or requested.

## Getting Involved

Prospective volunteers must submit a volunteer application to the MnCoSA volunteer coordinator. Once the application is received and reviewed, an informal interview is scheduled. All volunteers undergo training and background checks prior to admittance to the correctional facility.

### **For more information or to volunteer:**

MnCoSA Volunteer Coordinator  
651-361-7648  
[CoSAPrograms.DOC@state.mn.us](mailto:CoSAPrograms.DOC@state.mn.us)



### **Minnesota Department of Corrections**

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A program of the  
Minnesota Department of Corrections



## Mission

The mission of MnCoSA is to substantially reduce the risk of future sexual victimization by supporting people convicted of sexual offenses as they reenter the community and lead responsible, productive, and accountable lives.

### What is MnCoSA?

MnCoSA consists of a circle—a group of four to six volunteers—who provide pro-social support and accountability to a core member, a level 2 sex offender, following their release from prison. Circles work to:

**Collaborate** with the core member during the often difficult transition back into the community.

**Encourage** the core member to live a healthier life while providing the network and support necessary to do so.

**Provide** alternatives to patterns of thinking and acting that contribute to criminal behavior.

**Celebrate** milestones in the journey to healthy integration.

**Partner** in cooperation with police, supervision agents, treatment professionals, social service workers, etc. in support of the core member.

**Participating in a circle setting provides the opportunity to share knowledge and build on the life experiences of others.**

## What to Expect

Each circle lasts approximately one year with weekly one to two-hour meetings attended by all MnCoSA members, including the core member. A MnCoSA volunteer can anticipate meeting no more than two hours per week.

**Stage one:** The circle begins by meeting in a correctional facility three to five times before the core member's release.

**Stage two:** The circle transitions with the core member to a halfway house in either Ramsey or Hennepin County. The circle takes place at the halfway house. The halfway house placement usually lasts for 60 days.

**Stage three:** The circle transitions to meeting in the community at a time and place of their choosing, for the remainder of their program involvement.

### Key Terms

**Core member:** A level 2 sex offender who is being released to Ramsey or Hennepin County. The core member's participation is voluntary.

**Circle member:** A community volunteer who has applied and been trained to participate in a MnCoSA circle.

**Circle:** The meeting format for the core member and circle members. The circle represents a bond of mutual respect, understanding, and ownership in the process.

## History

Originally developed in 1994, Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) was created in Canada to help high-risk sex offenders successfully reintegrate into society.

In 2008, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) created MnCoSA to serve level 2 sex offenders being released to the community.

### Measured Success:

Participation in MnCoSA significantly reduced recidivism by:

- 62% for re-arrest
- 72% for technical violation revocation
- 84% for any return to prison

For every dollar spent on MnCoSA, the program has generated a benefit of \$1.82 (an 82% return on investment).

Source: Duwe, Grant. "Can Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) Work in the United States? Preliminary Results From a Randomized Experiment in Minnesota." *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. XX(X) (2012): 1-23. doi: 10.1177/1079063212453942