



Arkansas Department of Correction

**SEX OFFENDER COMMUNITY
NOTIFICATION ASSESSMENT**

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July 1, 2019

Governor Asa Hutchinson
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Senator Cecile Bledsoe
Chair, Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Senator Terry Rice
Vice-Chair, Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

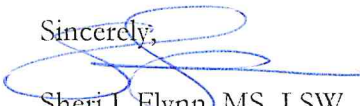
Representative Jeff Wardlaw
Chair, Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

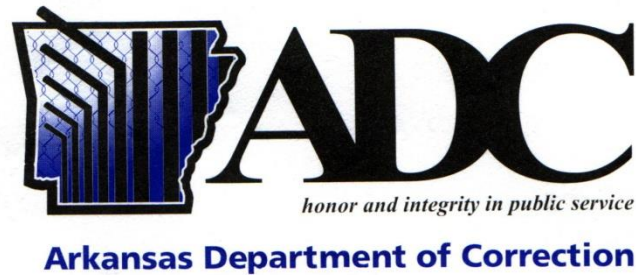
Representative Jim Dotson
Vice-Chair, Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Governor Hutchinson & Chairpersons:

Pursuant to state law, the Sex Offender Assessment Committee is to report to the Governor and Legislative Council each year a summary of the proceeding, a statement of revenue, expenditures and any additional requested information. I am enclosing a report on the Sex Offender Community Notification Assessment Program for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2019. The committee has no revenue and their expenses are covered by the Arkansas Department of Correction.

Sincerely,


Sheri J. Flynn, MS, LSW
SOCNA Administrator



Sex Offender Community Notification Assessment

Legislative Update FY 2019

Rory Griffin, MHA & Sheri Flynn, MS, LSW

7/1/2019

The Sex Offender Community Notification Assessment Program (SOCNA), under the auspices of the Arkansas Department of Correction has been conducting individualized community notification assessments since September 1999. SOCNA came into existence, in part, because of the need for consistency in the assessment process and because local law enforcement agencies did not have the time, resources or expertise to conduct individualized assessments. SOCNA continues to monitor and make changes in the process to comply with changes made by the General Assembly, to reduce the length of time for assessments, and to refine the individualized assessment process.

While SOCNA is part of the Arkansas Department of Correction, the Sex Offender Assessment Committee (SOAC) reviews and approves guidelines for the assessment process, votes to assign Level 4 status and reviews cases in which offenders

seek administrative review. The SOAC is a 9-member committee. Six (6) members of the Committee are appointed by the Governor; the remainder of the Committee is comprised of directors of ACC, ACIC and ADC, or the designees of those respective directors. Committee members are not paid a salary. The majority of the SOAC is comprised of state employees, who perform their duties on the SOAC on a voluntary basis or as included with their job duties at a state agency. There are only four members who are not state employees. Two do not ask for any compensation. Two submit a TR-1 to ADC for reimbursement for the mileage incurred travelling to and from the SOAC meetings. ADC covers these expenses. Each could seek a \$75 per diem, but none do. The SOAC does not have any budget or expenditures.

As mentioned, the SOAC reviews and approves the Sex Offender Assessment Committee Guidelines. Historically, the SOCNA Administrator and Supervising Psychologist revise the guidelines with input from the Secretary of the SOAC, Assistant Attorney General representative to the SOAC, the ADC Deputy Director of Health and Correctional Services and the ADC Director. The final product is then distributed to all members of the SOAC for review and edits and published for public comment before they are adopted, with approval by legislative committee. The guidelines are available on the ADC and ACIC websites. SOCNA also emails copies upon request. If it is necessary for copies to be made of the guidelines, ADC absorbs the cost for copies.

SOCNA & SEX OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

SOCNA began conducting assessments in the fall of 1999. As of June 30, 2019, the program has conducted approximately 16,256 assessments. Arkansas is committed to conducting an individualized community notification assessment which will provide local law enforcement agencies with accurate information to help community members protect themselves from future victimization.

SOCNA's assessment involves an extensive search for historical documentation on any sex offense charge, allegation or conviction; documentation of any violent offense; relevant research-derived actuarial instruments; a face-to-face interview with the sex offender and may include truth verification as to whether there may be undisclosed victims. SOCNA's multifaceted assessment often uncovers victims for whom an offender has never been caught and other sexually deviant interests or activities that impact public safety. Arkansas' assessment process is considered by professionals in the field to be among the best in the United States.

Research has identified factors that appear to impact sexual offense recidivism. Some of those factors include: age of the offender at onset of offending, age and gender of victims, manner in which offenders gain access to victims, relationship status (whether an offender can maintain age appropriate adult relationships), prior sexual offending, stranger victims, and extra-familial victims. The strongest predictors for sexual offense recidivism are sexual deviance and sexual interest in children. (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998, Vol. 66, No.2) To distinguish offenders more likely to re-offend and provide the public with reliable information, individualized actuarial-driven sex offender assessment is the appropriate mechanism for community notification. Assuming that all sex offenders are the same and present the same level of risk would be a disservice to the citizens of

Arkansas. There is also the risk of over-saturating the public with information on all sex offenders, which makes it more difficult to recognize the most dangerous offenders.

Arkansas continues to work to build a network of professionals who believe in the “containment” approach to sex offender management. The containment approach places a sex offender at the center of a system of professionals providing assessment, supervision and treatment of sex offenders. The idea is to *contain* the sex offender inside the network of professionals and closely monitor the offender’s behavior. Sex offenders who are assigned higher levels should receive more intensive services, monitoring and supervision. With limited funding devoted to sex offender management and a criminal justice system that is already overburdened, it remains crucial that Arkansas identify those in need of the most resources to protect the public.

Assessment information was originally intended to help local law enforcement agencies determine the appropriate level of community notification; however, a number of other agencies use the information in making decisions regarding offenders. Arkansas Community Correction (ACC) assigns parolees with a community notification Level 3 or 4 to an intensive after care program and monitors offenders closely. State law also places residency and employment restrictions on Level 3 and 4 sex offenders. The Arkansas Parole Board uses the information when making parole decisions and treatment recommendations. Treatment providers are given assessment information upon request. In addition to conducting community notification, local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors may use assessment information to help identify suspects when new sex crimes are reported and in making sentencing recommendations. Federal probation officers use the information to manage sex offenders. The Department of Human Services and Arkansas State Police regularly use the information in child maltreatment

investigations and decisions regarding child placement. Prosecutors and judges use the information when offenders petition to be removed from the sex offender registry. State licensing boards can be notified for offenders assigned Level 2 and above. SOCNA works diligently to maintain positive working relationships with all entities working in the sex offender management field. There is a constant exchange of information.

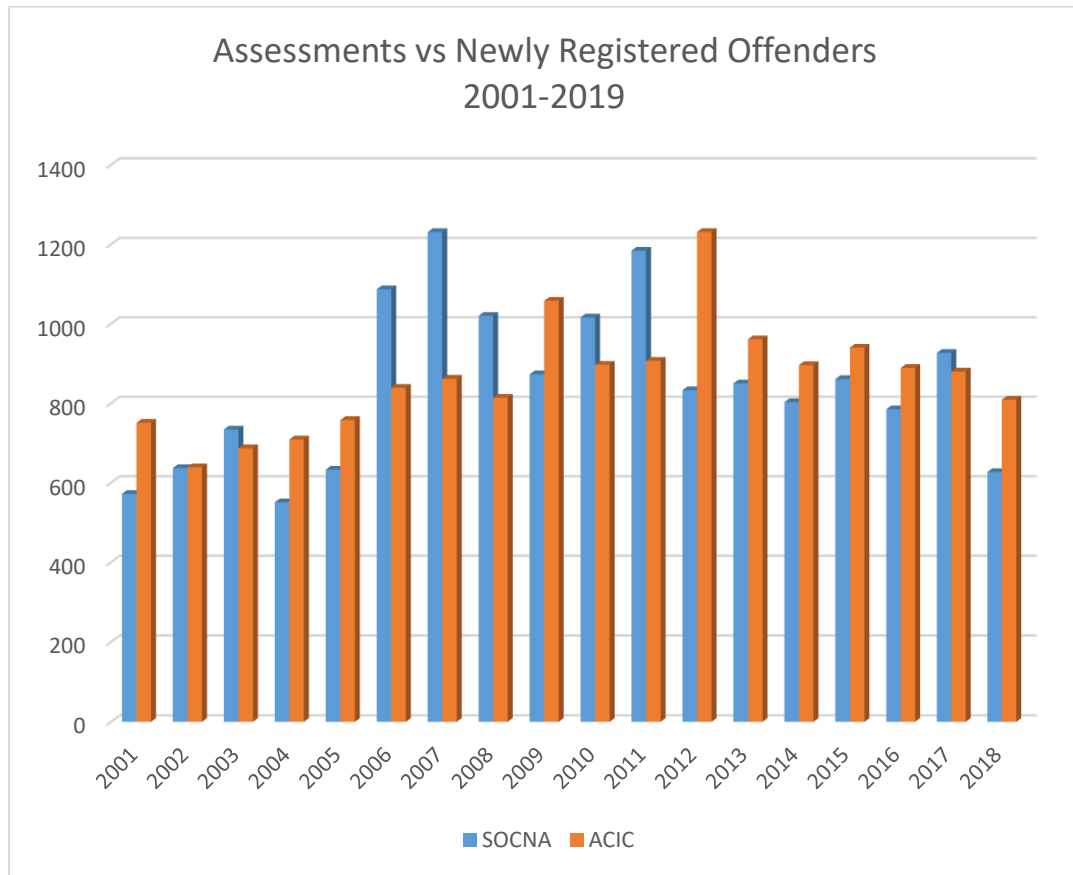
REGIONAL STAFF

In 2019, SOCNA hired 5 interview staff and placed them in regional offices around the state. The offices have been generously donated by local law enforcement offices and have not cost ADC anything other than some small office equipment and computer connectivity. This has allowed SOCNA to schedule offenders closer to their homes and speed up the interview process. We have also placed regional staff relatively closely to ADC units to allow ADC inmates to be assessed more frequently. This has also allowed SOCNA staff to network more closely with those in the criminal justice system on the local level. Thus far, the placement of regional staff has allowed SOCNA to hire extremely qualified applicants, who are committed to the mission of SOCNA and want to be a part of the SOCNA team. The use of regional staff has resulted in a positive impact on productivity, quality of work, morale, and relationships with local law enforcement.

ASSESSMENTS VS. NEWLY REGISTERED OFFENDERS

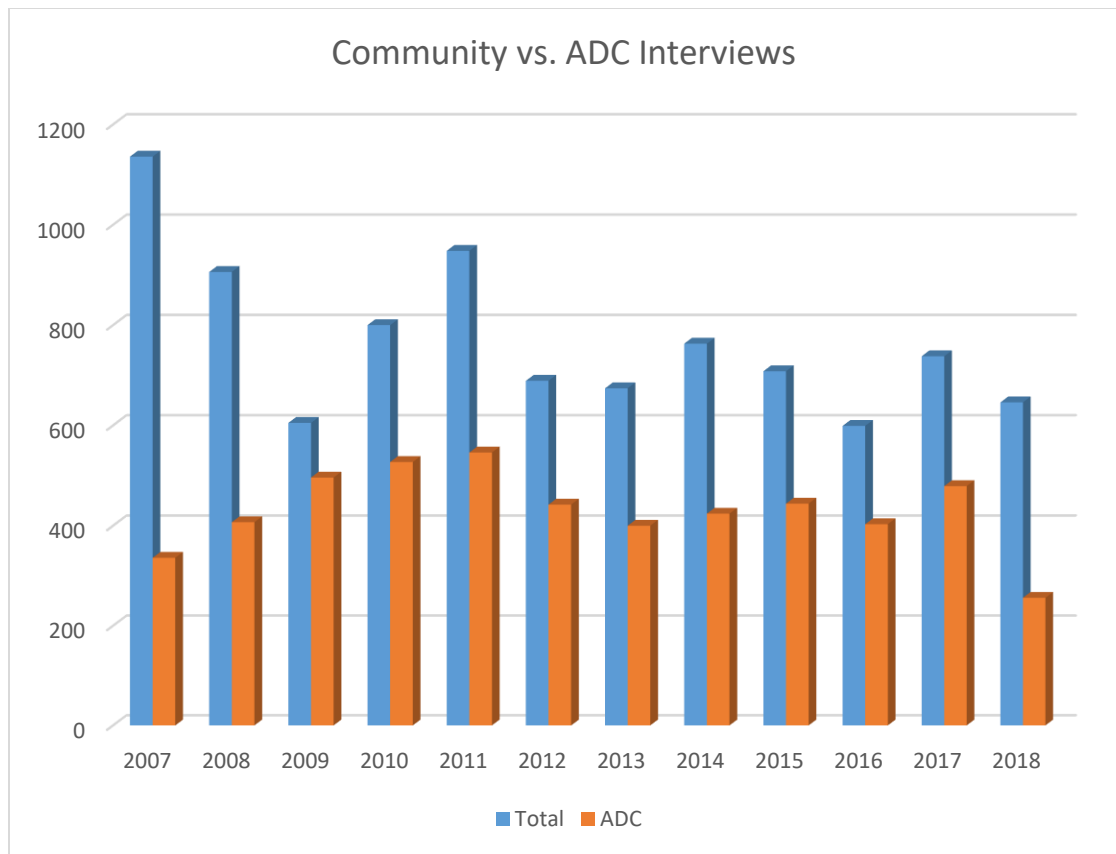
The chart below depicts the number of assessments completed by SOCNA per calendar year versus the number of newly registered sex offenders documented by the Arkansas Crime Information Center (ACIC). *

* ADC began to register sex offenders **as they entered** ADC, in order to accurately reflect the location of all offenders increasing the number of offenders registered; however, there is no backlog of offenders as the inmates are being assessed prior to release.



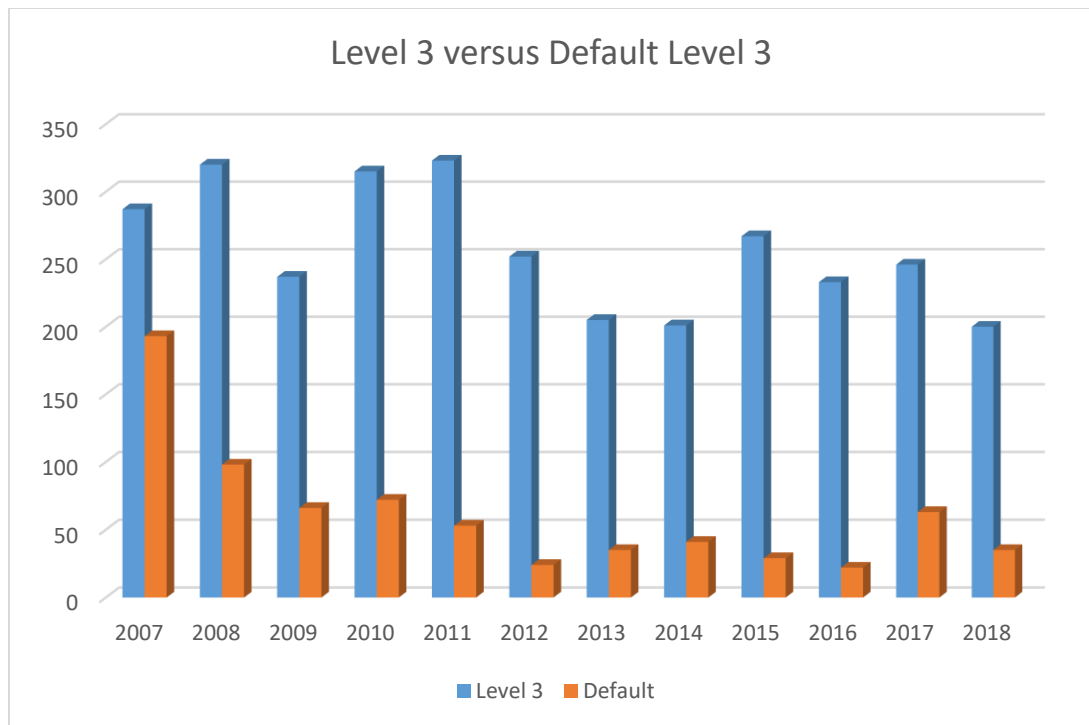
Community vs. ADC Interviews 2007-2018

SOCNA attempts to balance the number of assessments conducted on sex offenders currently living within communities, with the number of inmates about to be released from prison. SOCNA continues to make every effort to assess inmates prior to their Arkansas Parole Board hearing. Commissioners have indicated they find the thoroughness of the sex offender assessment helpful in their decision making. Due to vacancies in 2018, SOCNA had to prioritize assessments and primarily schedule offenders who were in communities with access to potential victims. The information listed below reflects the number of assessments scheduled for offenders living in communities versus those scheduled for ADC inmates from 2007-2018.



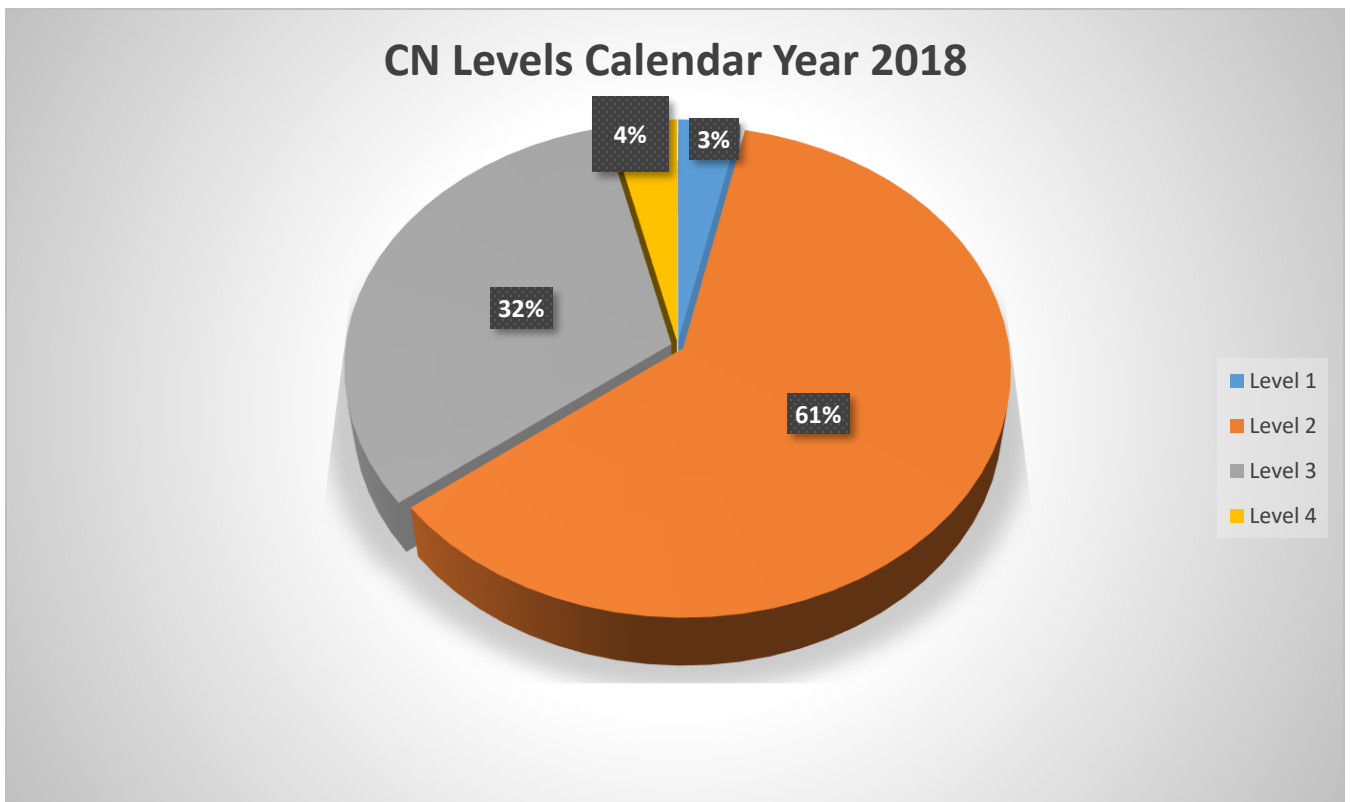
Level 3 versus Default Level 3 by Year:

Since 2007 there has been a significant drop in the number of offenders who default due to failure to comply with the assessment process. This is likely a result of the passage of a law that made refusal to cooperate with the assessment process a Class C felony. This has allowed for more accurate assessment of offenders who appear and cooperate with the assessment. Process. Below is a graph indicating the number of Level 3 offenders versus the number of Default Level 3's per year from 2007-2018.



Community Notifications Levels:

The following graph indicates the Community Notification Levels assigned by SOCNA through 2018. The number of Default Level 3s (offenders who refuse to fully cooperate with SOCNA despite being informed that noncooperation is chargeable as a felony offense) are included in the total number of Level 3s.



Contact Information

Further information is available from:

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