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February 1, 2008

SUBJECT: SARATSO (State Authorized Risk Assessment Tool for Sex Offenders) Review Committee Notification

Senate Bill 1128, Alquist (Chapter 337, Statutes of 2006) established the state committee, known as the SARATSO (State Authorized Risk Assessment Tool for Sex Offenders) Review Committee, to consider the selection of the risk assessment tools for California. (Pen. Code, 290.04) This Committee has three representatives appointed from the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Attorney General's office, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). One mandate of the committee is to select a state risk assessment tool for juvenile sex offenders, female offenders and adult offenders, if an appropriate tool is available and approved by the committee. To that end, the Committee has heard testimony from several experts who have authored risk assessment tools. The Committee has considered all testimony and reviewed the presentations in concert with the associated requirements established by statute.

For adults, the Committee has selected the Static-99 designed and cross-validated by Dr. Karl Hanson and Dr. David Thornton. This instrument is currently in use by CDCR as a tool to designate a parolee as a High Risk Sex Offender (HRSO). This instrument will become the only statewide risk assessment tool for adult males, which is mandated to be used by CDCR to assess every eligible inmate prior to parole and every eligible inmate on parole. This tool is further mandated for use by DMH to assess every eligible individual prior to release and by Probation for every eligible individual for whom there is a probation report. (Pen. Code, § 290.06)

For juveniles the Committee has selected the J-SORAT II designed and cross-validated by Dr. Douglas Epperson. This instrument will become the only state-authorized risk assessment tool for juveniles, which is mandated to be used by probation when assessing a juvenile sex offender at adjudication, and by CDCR/DJJ both prior to release from DJJ and while on supervision. (Pen. Code, §290.06.)

For female offenders the Committee has found that there currently is no risk assessment tool for this population that has been scientifically researched and validated. Therefore, the Committee does not have a recommendation

Implementation and Training:

On July 1, 2008 the Static-99 is mandated for use by the DMH, CDCR Parole and County Probation. Training-for-Trainers sessions will take place in the Winter/Spring of 2008.

This training shall be conducted by experts in the field of risk assessment and the use of actuarial instruments in predicting sex offender risk. Subject to requirements established by the committee, CDCR, DMH, County Probation Departments, and authorized local law enforcement agencies shall designate the appropriate persons within their organizations to attend training and, as authorized by the department, to train others within their organizations. Any person who administers the SARATSO shall receive training no less frequently than every two years.

The time factor is immediate. All agencies need to be fully trained for the July 1, 2008 implementation date.

If you have any questions or comments about the decisions of the Committee, please contact Kimberly Anderson, M.A. at (916) 651-2067 or by email at kimberly.anderson@dmh.ca.gov