

This is Justice Today, a radio program of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. We're here at a meeting at the Office of Justice Programs. Ladies and gentlemen, today we're interviewing Scott Matson, he is a Senior Policy Advisor of the Office of Justice Programs, the SMART Office, and we're here to talk about Sex Offender Management. Scott, I can't imagine a more difficult and contentious issue regarding Sex Offender Management. Office of Justice Programs provides guidance in terms of sex offender registry and in terms of sex offender management for the--for the criminal justice system for the entire country, correct?

That's correct. Our office is the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. And our primary purpose is to assist states, tribes, territories implementing Title I of the Adam Walsh Act, which is the sex offender registration and notification act.

Now, you've been doing this for decades. I do want to point that out when I--in my Department of Justice days when I used to refer people to you decades ago. So, you've been doing this for quite some time?

Yeah. About the last 15 years or so, I was with the Center for Sex Offender Management and before that the Institute for Public Policy in Washington State, so I've got a long history with this.

Now, sex offender registration that is something the Adam Walsh Act, something that we're trying to get states to do--states to implement. How many states have implemented this provision of the Adam Walsh Act and what are you doing to try to help the other states along to implement the provisions?

Good question. It's a big one. Are you ready? Well, so far, we have got 16 states that have implemented SORNA, and we have three territories and 36 Indian tribes across the country have implemented. And that doesn't really paint the full picture because we know that the majority of states are working on and have developed pieces of SORNA and they have them in place, such as the information sharing components and ability to track offenders as they cross state lines or jurisdictional lines. So, we are providing technical assistance to the states to help them develop policies and code and systems, information systems and data management systems to meet the requirements of SORNA. We're also providing some grant funding which, sort of, provides funding to jurisdictions to implement again pieces of SORNA, to help tribes and territories as well to implement pieces of SORNA.

Part of the new legislation is to bring additional people into the sex offender registries, correct?

It expands the number of offenses that are applicable for registration and notification. SORNA is a minimum set of requirements that the Federal

Government is asking states to adopt. So, what it is, is just trying to create a consistent set of standards across all the jurisdictions, so offenders can't evade registration and notification requirements from moving from one jurisdiction to the next.

Which is extraordinarily important. Now, sex offender management, trying to figure out the kind--there's not just one person or one type of an offender called a sex offender. There are many, many, many variations. What you're trying to do is develop a tool to be sure that we, within the criminal justice system fully understand who we have, the kind of sex offender this person is, and their true potential for recidivism and their true risk to public safety.

One of the most recent grant programs that we've authorized, we've provided funding for the replication of a treatment intervention progress scale that was developed in Vermont specifically for sex offenders. And it showed very good promise in predicting the reoffense rates and also in predicting or identifying needs of sex offenders as they're returning to communities. So, we're replicating that tool in a couple of additional jurisdictions now, and we've got NIJ on board where helping us evaluate those new sites and their adoption of this tool. So we're very excited about it really pushing the envelope further in evidence-based practice in sex offender management.

One of the themes of today has been evidence-based procedures. In other words, to get the very best evidence, what works, to really go with where the research is taking us, so we can do the best possible job of managing sex offenders in the community.

That's correct. There are several programs that are out there and we're trying to identify them presently through a broader project in sex offender management. And it's eye opening to see what kind of research has been done over the years and what really still needs to be done. So, I hope that OJP and the SMART Office, we can continue to fund good projects like this.

And speaking of funding, one of the things that the Office of Justice Programs does is to fund innovative programs for sex offender management. So we can learn from that to produce the research, do the analysis, create an evidence-based body of research, and disseminate that information to everybody else.

That's right. And it's great to have NIJ on board with this too. Because they're really the research arm of justice and to have them support the work that we're doing and help us navigate these research waters is crucial. So, we're helping to continue that relationship.

Ladies and gentlemen, we've talked today--spoken today to Scott Matson. He is the Senior Policy Advisor of the Office of Justice Programs, of the SMART Office dealing with the issue of Sex Offender Management. This is Justice Today, a

radio program of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Please have yourselves a very, very pleasant day.