

South Carolina
Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services



Sex Offender Program Standards

June 2024

The South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services (SCDPPPS) recognizes the importance of sex offender programs in the role of:

- Reducing the risk of recidivism by providing quality care to individuals who have engaged in sexual offending behavior by assisting them to manage their risk of sexually reoffending
- Facilitating treatment that will assist the offender in living a safe, healthy life
- Providing effective management to assist the offender in preventing sexual assault to protect communities
- Providing responsible and ethical treatment with high standards of professionalism and integrity to individuals who have been sexually offended

The purposes of sex offender programs are to:

- Hold individuals accountable,
- Confront collusion and victim-blaming,
- Teach new skills that assist offenders with changing their behavior,
- Collect data to assist with evaluation of programs and recidivism, and
- Report compliance and noncompliance to the SCDPPPS, courts, and other referral sources.

To ensure SCDPPPS staff are making referrals to quality sex offender programs, SCDPPPS has established standards for service providers offering a sex offender program to individuals under SCDPPPS' supervision. The purpose of creating and ensuring adherence to these standards is to:

- Promote consistency of services statewide,
- Provide a process to evaluate services, and
- Establish a minimum level of service and accountability expected from providers.

SCDPPPS will review providers at least every two years to ensure compliance with the standards.

Approved providers have met SCDPPPS standards and are authorized to provide services to SCDPPPS offenders. To be authorized as an *approved* sex offender program, a service provider must meet the following standards. *Conditional* providers have not met all SCDPPPS standards and will receive an action plan to rectify insufficient items within the designated timeframe.

Program Structure

- Uses a program structure that:
 - Is at least 18 months in length
 - Has weekly sessions that are at least 60 minutes in length
 - Does not include breaks, check-in, and discussions on fee payments as part of the 60-minute session
 - Does not devote more than 15 minutes per month to viewing videos
 - Holds groups
 - That are gender specific
 - That are limited to not less than two and not more than 10 participants
 - Attempts to hold the size of the group to eight to 10 participants, the preferred group size

- Web-based groups are limited to not less than two and not more than eight participants
 - Attempts to use a staggered entry approach (SEA), the preferred approach
 - Does not use individual intervention unless:
 - An individual is unable to participate in a group setting because they are too disruptive
 - No qualified group program is available
 - An individual's safety would be compromised
 - An individual has an intellectual or mental health disability that prevents successful group participation
- Has a written attendance policy that:
 - Allows no more than two absences within three months
 - Terminates clients with excessive absences without documented exigent circumstances
 - Notifies SCDPPPS staff of instances of exigent circumstances
- Focuses on group accountability
 - Encourages participants to disclose an accurate and detailed history of violent incidents towards victims which led to their referral to the sex offender program
 - Must be free from minimization, justification, or victim-blaming
 - Encourages participants to hold each other accountable for their abusive behaviors and for instances of denying, minimizing, justifying, and rationalizing
 - Acknowledges and challenges inappropriate comments and jokes
 - Incorporates discussion, activities, and exercises that encourage empathy towards victims and others affected by the participant's abusive behavior
- Complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Uses a cognitive behavioral therapy-based curriculum that includes the following:
 - Previous traumas
 - Sexual abuse education
 - Motives (e.g., sexual interest, emotional closeness, power and control)
 - Willingness (e.g., cognitive distortions, substance use, stress, psychopathy)
 - Opportunity (e.g., planned-opportunistic, manipulation-force grooming behaviors)
 - Victim awareness
- Requires participants who attend web-based sessions to:
 - Have access to a reliable internet service
 - Possess a device (e.g., phone, computer) with a camera capability and the camera remains directed toward him/herself during the entire session
 - Participate in sessions in a quiet space that is absent of any children, household members, or other potential onlookers
 - Test their connectivity before the first scheduled web-based session

Program Components

- Uses a multi-phase approach by developing new patterns of appropriate behavior and implementing new skills to relate to others to affect the client's behavior

appropriately

- Uses a treatment model that complies with the SCDPPPS' treatment model and containment approach
- Implements strategies that depend on agency coordination and multi-disciplinary partnerships to hold sex offenders accountable
- Uses an intake process that addresses substance use, mental health, and recidivism
- Uses a method of case management and treatment that emphasizes victim protection and public safety
 - Develops and implements a written treatment plan for each client outlining clear and specific treatment goals consistent with the results of a recent evaluation
 - Updates assessments every six months from the initial assessment date if the original evaluation was not comprehensive or if changes in circumstances dictate
 - Identifies and documents specific and observable changes in factors associated with a client's risk for re-offense, or the lack of such changes, in treatment records and progress reports
 - Discusses treatment plan with clients and provide regular feedback to clients on their treatment compliance and progress or lack thereof
 - Prepares clients for treatment discharge which includes a relapse prevention plan
 - Does not successfully discharge clients who deny their offense(s)
- Has a written fee payment policy that includes a process to address indigent offenders
- Has a written policy addressing failure to pay
- Has a written transfer policy
 - Any individual in good standing in a South Carolina program that seeks to transfer as a matter of preference to another South Carolina program may do so but class credit is not guaranteed
 - Participants are considered to be in good standing if:
 - All homework assignments have been completed
 - Group fees are current
 - The client is compliant with the group attendance policy
 - The client is compliant with program rules and regulations
 - Participants who want to transfer to a different program must sign a release of information so that the two programs may contact each other to establish the status of the participant in the new program and share any other relevant information about the participant
- Has a written client grievance policy and procedure
 - Before filing any complaint against a sex offender program, the participant should try to resolve the complaint informally by talking with the class facilitator
 - If unable to agree with the facilitator, the participant shall contact the program director who shall attempt to resolve the complaint
 - If the complaint remains unresolved, a formal written complaint may be made to:

SCDPPPS

293 Greystone Boulevard
Columbia, SC 29210

or Service.Providers@ppp.sc.gov

Attention: Program Planning and Development

Mandated Reporting and Duty to Warn

Providers must:

- Abide by applicable laws that mandate reporting abuse to appropriate authorities
- Inform clients that disclosure of potentially incriminating information to mandated reporters can lead to future prosecution
- Follow professional and legal obligations regarding a duty to protect or warn that apply to their profession when a client has communicated a credible, specific, and immediate threat of serious bodily injury against a specifically identified, readily identifiable person or themselves
- Warn the intended victim, notify the police, or take other steps that would be deemed reasonable and necessary under the circumstances

Communication

Providers must:

- Distribute written or electronic copies of the rules and guidelines upon completion of intake
- Provide weekly attendance report to SCDPPPS' referral source
- Have an established process to communicate program progress monthly with SCDPPPS' referral source
 - Contact the referring SCDPPPS staff within 24 hours of the discovery of any new violation on behalf of the participant such as any new offense, violation of a drug test, or contact with the victim when there is a no-contact order
 - Inform the client and SCDPPPS staff if there is an anticipation of disruption or termination of the client's services
 - Include offender's treatment plan and participation/progress in treatment monthly progress report
- Have an established process that allows SCDPPPS staff to attend groups
- Discuss completion before the client's discharge with the referring SCDPPPS staff

Miscellaneous

Providers must:

- Have general liability insurance
- Have space independent of the SCDPPPS county office where services are provided
- Store files in a secure location and follow a retention schedule

Paid Staff and Volunteer Requirements

- Pass a criminal background check
- Remain free from conflicts of interest with the sex offender program by not:
 - Receiving gifts, compensation, or other consideration of value from any participant or from any other party that might give the appearance of being designed to influence the assessment of a participant
 - Being employed by another entity in a manner that is deemed to be a conflict of interest by these sex offender treatment program standards
 - Being employed by another entity where disclosure by the sex offender program participant of their action might create confidentiality breaches
 - Recruiting potential clients who are or have been in the sex offender program for one's own private counseling or therapy practice

- Maintain compliance with group facilitator minimum qualification and education requirements:
 - Requires group facilitators to meet the following minimum qualifications:
 - Hold a bachelor's, master's, or doctor's degree in social work, psychology, counseling, or marriage and family therapy from an accredited university with unrestricted licensure through the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (SCLLR) or a degree of Doctor of Medicine from an accredited institution with licensure through the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC)
 - Have two years of experience working with individuals who sexually offend
 - If the facilitator's highest level of education is a bachelor's level, three years of experience is required and they must have direct access to a mental health professional who has an unrestricted license through the SCLLR or a degree of Doctor of Medicine from an accredited institution with licensure through the SCDHEC
 - Refrain from diagnosing, using assessment methods, treating, or consulting on clinical problems that are outside of their scope of practice
- Maintain compliance with professional development requirements
 - Requires group facilitators to complete a minimum of 12 credit hours of continuing education annually. Areas include:
 - Assessment and diagnosis
 - Cognitive therapy
 - Counseling and psychotherapy
 - Cultural/ethnic issues
 - Ethics as applies to working with a forensic population
 - Human development with special attention to sexual development
 - Interviewing skills
 - Knowledge of family dynamics as related to sex offending
 - Psychometric and psychophysiological testing
 - Psychopathology
 - Relapse prevention
 - Relationship and social skills training
 - Risk assessment
 - Sexual arousal control
 - Social support networks
 - Victim awareness and empathy
 - Obtain continuing education credits in the following approved methods:
 - Seminars and workshops
 - Webinars
 - Online training programs
 - Relevant academic coursework

Preferred providers are providers that have met SCDPPPS standards as well as additional preferred standards. SCDPPPS staff are instructed to use *preferred* providers over *approved* providers. To be authorized as a *preferred* sex offender program, a service provider is required to meet two of the following standards:

- Uses a baseline and maintenance polygraph to support treatment and containment supervision
 - Must be administered by a licensed polygraph examiner and should be administered at the discretion of the provider or agent
 - Has process where all polygraph fees are collected by the polygraph provider
- Participates regularly in community events focused on sexual violence
- Meets monthly with SCDPPPS' designated sex offender agent(s)
- Has a membership with the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) or possesses a sex offender treatment credential

At least every two years, SCDPPPS will review a provider to ensure compliance with standards. However, SCDPPPS will conduct a review before two years if a complaint is received or upon the request of the provider. If a provider is not compliant with all standards and depending on the severity of noncompliance, one of the following may occur:

- The provider will receive a corrective action plan and a follow-up review will be scheduled.
- The provider will not be approved to provide sex offender programming.
- If previously approved, the provider will be removed from the service provider directory and services will be terminated immediately.

A denied/removed program can submit a new application for review six months after the denial date.

For questions regarding the approval process, please contact Service.Providers@ppp.sc.gov.

SCDPPPS Sex Offender Program Checklist

A provider is required to meet all standards to be approved to render sex offender treatment services.

Required Standards				
Category	Standard	Standard Met		
Program Structure	Is at least 18 months in length	Yes	No	
	Holds weekly sessions that are at least 60 minutes in length	Yes	No	
	Holds gender-specific groups	Yes	No	
	Observes size limitation	Yes	No	
	Complies with SCDPPPS' treatment model and containment approach	Yes	No	
	Has written attendance policy	Yes	No	
	Focuses on group accountability	Yes	No	
	Complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act	Yes	No	
	Has a curriculum that meets all required program components	Yes	No	
	Complies with web-based standards (if applicable)	Yes	No	
	Program Components	Uses an intake process that addresses substance use, mental health, and recidivism	Yes	No
		Has a written fee payment policy	Yes	No
Has a written policy addressing failure to pay		Yes	No	
Has a written transfer policy		Yes	No	
Has a written client grievance policy and procedure		Yes	No	
Uses intake paperwork that contains disclosure on mandated reporting and duty to warn		Yes	No	
Communication	Distributes written copies of the rules and guidelines	Yes	No	
	Communicates the offender's program progress with SCDPPPS staff	Yes	No	
	Allows SCDPPPS staff to attend groups	Yes	No	
Provider	Has general liability insurance	Yes	No	
	Has a space independent of the SCDPPPS county office where services are provided	Yes	No	
	Holds files in a secure location	Yes	No	

Required Standards			
Category	Standard	Standard Met	
Staff	Conducts criminal background checks	Yes	No
	Complies with conflicts of interest standards	Yes	No
	Complies with education requirements	Yes	No
	Complies with professional development requirements	Yes	No

Preferred Standards			
	Standard	Standard Met	
	Uses baseline and maintenance polygraphs to support treatment and containment supervision	Yes	No
	Participates regularly in community events focused on sexual violence	Yes	No
	Meets monthly with designated sex offender agent(s)	Yes	No
	Has a membership with the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers or possess a sex offender treatment credential	Yes	No

Comments	

Check applicable designation

Preferred: _____	Approved: _____	Not Approved: _____
If Applicable, Correction Action Plan: _____ _____	Correction Action Plan Completion Date: _____	
SCDPPPS' Staff Signature: _____	Date: _____	