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Reintegration of Child Sex Offenders in New Zealand

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the Doctor of Clinical Psychology at The University of Auckland, 2010.

ABSTRACT

Reintegration of child sex offenders following incarceration is most successful if matched to the needs of offenders, victims and the community, whilst minimising risk of recidivism and developing offenders into prosocial citizens (Austin, 2001). This study explored child sex offenders' expectations for and experiences of reintegration into the community. A longitudinal design was used in which semi-structured interviews covering issues identified in the literature as being related to reintegration. Nine offenders were interviewed within one week prior to release from prison, 3 months post-release and 6 months post-release. Interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Seven themes emerged that identified child sex offenders' expectations for release that included fear of community members' reactions, the importance of having pre-arranged accommodation and employment, social support, relationships with probation officers, maintaining optimism for a new way of life, and the place of cultural needs. Participants' expectations for release closely reflected their experiences of release. Negative community reactions were encountered and were stressful, there were problems finding accommodation and employment, social support was important, relationships with probation officers were problematic, as was building a new life, and there were issues concerning accountability to one's cultural group. This data confirmed that most child sex offenders' fear their release from prison into the community and once released struggle to live in society. Overall reintegration planning was simplistic and aimed primarily to manage risk factors rather than promote positive reintegration. Those offenders who were most successful on release, tended to have more comprehensive reintegration plans which enabled them to visualise what life would be like after release, consequently increasing their optimism that they could live successfully in the community. Recommendations are made to enhance current reintegration.

To my mother.

“A goal without a plan is just a wish”

Larry Elder

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