



## **DEFINITIONS**

Case Co-management: The process by which an assigned facility Caseworker and field office Probation & Parole Officer engage in collaborative decision-making about an offender's case.

Case Management: DOC activities and programs related to offender case planning, community supervision, and custody. It is the collaborative process of classifying, assessing risk and needs, case planning, applying correctional resources, and supporting an offender from detention to discharge.

Case Planning: The process by which case co-managers, working collaboratively with the offender and associated stakeholders, make decisions about activities designed to reduce criminogenic needs, promote responsibility-taking, repair harm, and support offender reintegration into the community.

Circles of Support & Accountability (COSA) Team: A group of three to five trained community volunteers who work with a person coming out of prison (the core member) for a minimum of one year.

Community Partner: A municipal entity or non-profit organization funded to provide COSA Teams.

Core Member: The offender returning to the community from incarceration who is involved with the COSA Team and Community Partner.

Correctional Services Specialist (CSS): A staff role in facilities and field offices; also referred to as Caseworker (facility) or Probation/Parole Officer (PO) (field). Field and facility Correctional Services Specialists share responsibility for case co-management for offenders assigned to their caseload.

"Max-out": When an inmate completes their maximum sentence while incarcerated and is released without any supervision by the Department of Corrections.

Sexual Offender Supervision and Offender Re-entry Services Coordinator: A staff role in the Vermont Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Abuse office. This position provides case management oversight for incarcerated and community supervised sex offenders.

## **PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

The COSA model began in 1994 as a grass roots movement of the Mennonite Church in Ontario, Canada. A COSA Team is a group of three to five trained community volunteers who work for a minimum of one (1) year with an offender coming out of prison (the "core member"). A community partner receives funding to coordinate a COSA Team. The volunteers support the offender as the offender transitions from prison to the community. The offender is a key part of the team and not just a recipient of support. COSA Teams have four primary goals: 1) to improve community and victim safety; 2) to improve the coordination of support, services, and community connections for re-entry participants (core members); 3) to establish and maintain clear expectations in regards to healthy and positive community behaviors; and 4) to repair the relationships between the core members and the community by facilitating restorative activities.

### **1. Target Population**

Offenders identified for a COSA Team (including out of state offenders) will:

- a. Present a moderate to high risk to reoffend either sexually or violently based on their Level of Service Inventory (LSI-R) score, Static-99R score, VASOR-2 score, and/or additional risk assessments; **OR** present a moderate to high need for pro-social supports based on their LSI-R score; **AND**
- b. Be within approximately one year of release.

Priority will be given to those offenders who are treatment-compliant while incarcerated.

## **2. Review/Referral Process**

Case co-managers will routinely discuss facility-based re-entry services, which may support successful community transition, residence options, community expectations, and utilization of community resources, such as COSA Teams.

- a. At the 'one year or six months until projected release date' Case Management review, the case co-managers may identify an offender to be considered for participation on a COSA Team if the offender meets the above criteria and expresses an interest in participation.
- b. In rare instances, a PO may identify an offender in the community to be considered for participation on a COSA Team if the offender meets the above criteria and expresses an interest in participation.
- c. The Caseworker or PO will explain and have the offender sign the *VT DOC Acknowledgment and Waiver of Limits of Confidentiality Form (Attachment 1)*.
- d. The Caseworker will complete the *COSA Case Summary Form (Attachment 2)* and provide the PO with a copy.
- e. The PO will provide the completed *COSA Case Summary Form* to the field Program Supervisor designated in their office to preliminarily approve or deny the COSA referral.
- f. If preliminarily approved, up to six (6) months prior to an offender's anticipated release the PO will refer the case to the Community Partner, which may consider providing a COSA Team in the community where the offender will reside upon release. The PO will provide the Community Partner with a copy of the signed *VT DOC Acknowledgment and Waiver of Limits of Confidentiality Form* and a copy of the *COSA Case Summary Form*.

## **3. Acceptance Process**

- a. The field Program Supervisor and/or PO will meet with a staff member from the Community Partner to discuss the referral.
- b. A staff member from the Community Partner will meet with the offender and the Facility Caseworker to explain the program's supports and expectations and confirm interest in participation.
- c. Upon reviewing the Case Summary and meeting with the offender, the staff member from the Community Partner will determine whether or not to accept the case.
- d. In the event that a referral is declined, the Community Partner must provide an explanation in writing as to why they declined the case to the PO who made the referral.
- e. If the case is accepted, a staff member from the Community Partner, in collaboration with the PO, will complete a broad assessment of the offender's strengths and needs. The assessment will identify housing and employment options, counseling requirements (including sex offender treatment, substance abuse, and mental health needs), family resources, and other pertinent information. It will also include supervision requirements, victim needs, and community issues, if relevant.

#### **4. Operation of the COSA Teams**

- a. Once the case is accepted, the Community Partner will begin recruiting at least three (3) appropriate volunteers who commit to work with the offender for at least one (1) year.
- b. Orientation and training for the volunteers will be provided.
- c. Once the Team is established, a DOC Volunteer Coordinator will approve each volunteer and provide volunteer orientation, including having each volunteer sign the DOC Work Rules. ii. Staff from the Community Partner, in collaboration with the PO, will deliver targeted training to the volunteers that includes the COSA model and role of a COSA volunteer, and the specific needs/strengths of the offender, including supervision requirements.
- d. If possible, the COSA Team will meet with the offender, the Caseworker, and a DOC Program Services member at the correctional facility prior to the offender's release.
- e. The basic COSA Team operating structure is comprised of weekly, one-hour team meetings with the offender, volunteers, and a staff member from the Community Partner. In addition to the weekly meetings, the volunteers may also provide informal outreach to the offender as deemed appropriate by the COSA Team and PO. This may take the form of transportation, assistance looking for work, or leisure time activities.
- f. Every six (6) to eight (8) weeks, staff from the Community Partner will organize a larger group meeting that includes the offender, PO, family members, landlord, and anyone else who has significant involvement with the offender's re-entry. The purpose of this meeting is to share information, identify goals, and address concerns.
- g. A staff member from the Community Partner will conduct an evaluation meeting after the COSA Team has worked with the offender for a period of one (1) year. The following questions will be answered at this meeting and provided to the PO:
  - i. What, if any, are the next steps? (This could include continuing to meet.)
  - ii. What worked well?  
What could be improved upon?
- h. In the event that the COSA Team continues to meet past a period of one (1) year, the DOC Restorative Systems Administrator or the Sexual Offender Supervision and Re-entry Services Coordinator will meet with staff from the Community Partner to assess the need for continued oversight.
- i. If at any time the offender chooses to cease participation on the COSA Team, the PO will determine if this will affect the offender's supervision status (e.g., violation of furlough.)

#### **5. Oversight/Support**

The DOC Restorative Systems Administrator and the Sexual Offender Supervision and Re-entry Services Coordinator will be responsible for providing ongoing quality oversight of COSA Teams statewide. Part of quality oversight will include the following:

- a. The DOC Restorative Systems Administrator and the Sexual Offender Supervision and Re-entry Services Coordinator will meet with DOC representatives from each local Probation and Parole Office and staff from the Community Partners twice a year to discuss each offender and their specific COSA Team. The DOC representatives will provide feedback on the following:

- i. The nature of the relationships between the offender and the volunteers;
  - ii. The status of the team and future plans; and
  - iii. How the team is functioning.
- b. The DOC Restorative Systems Administrator will hold quarterly grant progress meetings for staff from the Community Partners.
- c. DOC will sponsor additional evaluation activities, which may include interviews with COSA volunteers, core members and staff from the Community Partner.

## **TRAINING**

The Facility Superintendent and District Manager, or their designee, are responsible for ensuring that facility and field staff are trained in the provisions of this directive.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The DOC Restorative Systems Administrator and the Sexual Offender Supervision and Re-entry Services Coordinator shall ensure that all information and data regarding COSA Teams is collected in a way that is timely and accurate for purposes of evaluating teams statewide. This includes implementing any and all methods required for the collection, reporting and dissemination of data.

Attachment 1 - Sample

**VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND WAIVER OF LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (*Name of Offender and Date of Birth*), consent

(Print)

to the unrestricted communication and/or disclosure of information regarding my prior offense(s) and risk factors between

\_\_\_\_\_  
(*Name of Municipal Entity/Non-Profit Organization*)

and the Vermont Department of Corrections (“Department”), including, but not limited to, Vermont Treatment Program for Sexual Abusers (VTPSA) staff.

I am requesting re-entry services, specifically a COSA Team from the municipal entity/non-profit organization named above.

I understand that DOC Re-entry Support & Accountability Team/COSA Team Volunteers have an obligation to inform the Department if my behavior presents a clear and imminent danger to either myself or other persons.

This form has been fully explained to me. I fully understand it and voluntarily give my consent.

I understand that this is a limited waiver and not a general waiver of my rights, and I retain full authority for all other disclosures not specifically waived by this agreement.

I understand that I may revoke this waiver at any time.

I further understand that such a revocation may result in my termination from participating in a COSA Team.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(*Offender*)

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(*Signature*)

Attachment 2 - Sample

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
COSA CASE SUMMARY FORM

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Offender Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Correctional Facility: \_\_\_\_\_ Caseworker: \_\_\_\_\_

Address upon Release: \_\_\_\_\_ Field PO: \_\_\_\_\_

Conviction (Index Offense): \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Conviction: \_\_\_\_\_

Min. Release Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Max. Release Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What type of supervision upon release?  Conditional Reentry  Parole  Probation

**Offense Summary:** This is a concise and factual summary of the affidavit. Do not attach a copy of the affidavit or retype the affidavit in place of summarizing the offense. The summary should include the offender's age at the time of the abuse, the victim's age, gender, and relationship to the offender, and the factual details of the offense.

**Victim Input:** Contact the Victim Services Specialist to obtain their input. In this section, refer to the victim (s) by initials only.

**Mandated DOC Treatment:** This is a summary of the offender's participation in any mandated treatment (e.g., VTPSA, CSC, InDap.) Also indicate here any mandated community treatment once released.

**Risk Factors:** This is a summary of the offender's risk factors for reoffending.

Attachment 2 - Sample

**Reoffense Risk:** Provide a narrative explanation of the results of the assessment tools (e.g., LSI-R, Static-99R, VASOR-2). Do not include the actual scores.

**Familial and Social Relationships:** Describe the offender's current relationship with their parents, siblings, and any other significant relationships and indicate if the offender perceives the relationship as supportive or non-supportive.

**Other Pertinent Information:** In this section, include information that you believe would be pertinent for the COSA Team to know when working with the offender, such as mental health issues, developmental disabilities, or major medical issues.