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A Quick Reference Guide for New CoSA Coordinators

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A Quick Reference Guide for New CoSA Coordinators

Introduction

You may or may not have heard of Circles of Support and Accountability – known world-wide by its acronym, “CoSA.” You may know, for instance, that CoSA began in Canada, and that it was first formed around a person released from prison to the community who was a high-risk for repeating sexual offenses against children. You might also know that it was first introduced by members of a Mennonite congregation who volunteered their time and efforts to support and hold this man accountable. You might also know that since that first CoSA was formed in 1994, other communities have also formed CoSA in their cities and towns in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other places in Europe and around the world. And, last, you may have heard that CoSA has had good success in reducing offense rates among the men and women with whom it works, known as “Core Members.”

Knowing all this, you and others may be thinking, “We need CoSA here, too.” We probably agree! Properly implemented, which is what this document is all about, we have witnessed CoSA’s effectiveness in many locations. We have also witnessed failed efforts. We have been directly involved in the formation of CoSA almost everywhere it has taken root and what follows is some of what we have learned in that process from some amazing people who have pioneered CoSA in their own locations. While this document is prepared primarily for Americans who find themselves as new, first time-ever “CoSA Coordinators,” it is also easily adaptable to individuals in other countries as well.

In writing this document, we make several assumptions. The first of those is that you are in a position to lead the establishment of CoSA in your community, and/or you are or are likely to be the “CoSA Coordinator” or project lead with an organization that has set out to establish CoSA for the first time. The second assumption is that while you may have other project management experience, neither you nor your organization have been involved with a CoSA before, and are new to this experience. The last assumption is that you are *not* trying to establish a CoSA alone as an individual, or even as an organization (i.e. a church congregation) separate from the wider faith and non-faith, lay not-for-profits, and mandated agencies (departments of corrections, probation, parole, police, treatment providers, addictions specialists).

If you are trying to establish a CoSA project all by yourself, we urge you to stop right now. One of the fundamental principles of CoSA is that no one does this work alone. We and others have learned this the hard way; so you don't need to. We want you to be successful and effective in implementing your vision and accomplishing your goals. You need a team of like-minded people who are willing to learn about CoSA, why you need to, and how you can engage your wider community to ensure proper implementation.

There is a common and too often repeated misconception about CoSA. It may stem from CoSA's early history, or from the relatively simple and straightforward notion that providing support for people in need is a good thing. The misconception is that an otherwise good and well-intended individual, together with several other, equally good and well-intended "volunteers" can form a "circle" around a person who has sexually offended who they happen to know about (or have been asked to help with), and call themselves a CoSA. We have certainly encountered situations like this and we have, unfortunately, also witnessed people getting hurt as a result. We have seen their vision for a CoSA dashed by very skeptical corrections, probation, parole, and law-enforcement officials who decided it was not safe for them to be involved. In order to be successful in establishing your CoSA project, you will ultimately need the blessing, support, and guidance of those professionals. When they walk away, you are pretty much dead-in-the-water, and it will be very difficult to establish a "legitimate" CoSA in that community in the future. Let's avoid that happening, and learn how to get everyone onside.

We suggest you carefully read the primary manuscript, *Circles of Support & Accountability A "How To" Guide for Establishing CoSA in Your Location*. It covers some of the more fundamental, "how-to" questions, and others that have arisen from time-to-time in our experience. It is also a primary introduction to the fundamental principles of CoSA, and some good resource documents in its appendices. Also, there are three appendices in this document. **Appendix A** is a generic workplan that will walk you through the necessary steps for implementing a CoSA. **Appendix B**, which is also in the larger "How To" guide, is a generic CoSA Coordinator job description. We will discuss **Appendix C** in a forthcoming section. These appendices can and should be amended to reflect your organization's needs and the reality of your new position as a CoSA Coordinator, but we urge you and your organization stay as close as possible to the "script" these two appendices flesh-out for you.

Perhaps the first thing to know (apart from no one attempts this alone, is that establishing a healthy, viable CoSA takes anywhere from a year to two years of consistent, persistent effort. Your task is to find a home for your CoSA if you are an individual acting alone. You need to locate a not-for-profit charitable organization (i.e., a 501(c)(3) in the USA) willing to take on CoSA as one of the things they do as an agency. You may need to present your idea to several groups before you find one that is willing to work with you. You need such an organization so you can apply for grants, bursaries, and donations to help fund your CoSA. You also need the oversight of an “accountability” group (their management group, board-of-directors, etc.) with standing and credibility in the community, and with potential funders.

The details above mean that you will need to know what CoSA is, how it works, who it works with, what research and evaluations have shown in terms of its effectiveness, and why it would be good to have a CoSA in your community. That’s a lot of homework, and we would again point you to the larger how-to document that will help walk you through the stages of establishing a CoSA in your community.

On the other hand, you could look into starting your own 501(c)(3). That is also a heavy lift in terms of workload. If this is the route you choose, then you need to get on that pretty quickly, and the point at which you can take on a core member in a circle is pushed out even further. Perhaps, you already have an organization willing to work with you. Perhaps, they have already done their homework, and are hiring you to get their CoSA off the ground. We recommend you do your homework anyway (see above), and hold several meetings with your group to ensure everyone is singing from the same hymnbook in terms of vision, strategy, inputs and outputs, and longer-term outcomes.

Believe it or not, your most challenging task will be (in order) community engagement to secure buy-in; fund-raising (if that is something you specifically will need to do); volunteer recruitment, screening, training and retention; obtaining suitable offender referrals; effectively providing supervision and oversight of your circles; and careful attention to your own self-care.

In the best of worlds, you and/or your organization have read through the available resource documents referred to above before hiring you. If you are an organization looking to take on a project leader/coordinator, or if you are starting from scratch as an individual, the

following summary describes you or the person you are looking for in terms of experiences, knowledge base and personal attributes. You should also refer to **Appendix B**.

The *ideal* CoSA Coordinator:

- Is an ardent proponent of restorative justice and feels at ease with restorative practices;
- Has experience in project management or co-ordination involving paid staff persons, and unpaid, volunteer persons;
- Has experienced success in hiring staff and recruiting, screening, training and managing or supervising volunteers;
- Likes people and is drawn to working as a member of a team, and has experience as a “team-leader” and a team builder – knows how to motivate people, work through conflict and keep people whole, champion a vision, earn and maintain respect;
- “Knows” the community or communities in which the CoSA project will be established; that is,
 - Lives or has recently lived in or close to the community and,
 - Is familiar with the resources and services returning offenders will need to access in order to successfully re-enter the community (e.g., available housing, foodbanks, medical services; charitable outlets for clothing, food; employment agencies and maybe even some employers; different faith communities and what they do and don’t offer; mental health services including addictions recovery, and other things)
- Is known and trusted in the community by people who know her/him through other work being done in the community, either paid or volunteered in church, with sports teams or through social and cultural events and activities
- Is able to offer his or her own personal story as testament to having sufficient life experience to understand there are no guarantees in life, and that while conflict is sometimes unavoidable, problems can be resolved peacefully with effort and healthy collaboration
- Is able to persevere alone, but would rather reach out to others for knowledge, experience and help in achieving the means to accomplish a goal, and believes there is little to be gained by re-inventing the wheel

- Doesn't need to have someone else telling her or him where to start and what to do, can work with little direction, can "self-initiate," and most of all can network and create collaborative pathways to achieve success in the CoSA project
- Has a solid support network of his or her own made up of friends, colleagues and family who are meaningful supporters and provide a healthy, personal accountability network

To the extent you are able to meet or exceed these attributes, congratulations! You are a very valuable person, and will be critical to the success of this CoSA project. You will find yourself challenged to bring these and other qualities and skills to bear as you work with your organization to bring CoSA to fruition. Likewise, to the extent you do not possess these attributes, the greater your challenges will be in acquiring them, and the steeper your learning curve will be. But, the task at hand is not impossible if you are prepared to lean on the abilities of others.

There is one caveat, however: we have found that individuals who are very new to a community and who do not know the community well (i.e., may be looking to "integrate" with the community for the first time themselves; finding long-term lodging, employment, friends and colleges) and are not well known, tend not perform well in the capacity of CoSA Coordinator. This is even the case for individuals who may bring a history of involvement with CoSA elsewhere. For many communities – maybe even all communities in our experience – the clientele of CoSA (e.g., persons at high risk to reoffend, sexually or otherwise) represent a potential threat to the well-being of the community. A community's natural instinct is to push them out. CoSA represents a counter-intuitive plan of action – to instead invite them in. An engaged and knowledgeable community working collaboratively with mandated criminal justice agencies increases community health and safety. If that message comes from someone already known and trusted in the community, that's one thing; even though it may still be an uphill struggle to establish a CoSA. If someone who is unknown to the community – a relative stranger – attempts to introduce CoSA, our experience has been that there will be additional conflict and distrust. Further, the prospects of the visionary stranger getting a foothold in the community may also be damaged. This can sometimes be offset through a well thought-out CoSA "infrastructure" being in place beforehand. We will address what we mean by such an "infrastructure" in the

pages ahead but, for now, we would suggest that if you are a relative unknown in the community yourself, attempting to introduce CoSA may not be the best way of introducing yourself.

Okay, so you are a consummate project manager from way back, and a favorite child of the community (we realize we are asking a lot here, but try not to take any short cuts). Now what? There are a number of things with which you'll need to become familiar.

Specialized Knowledge-Sets You'll Need to Develop (at least over time)

Being an effective CoSA Coordinator will require you to have specialized knowledge in a number of important areas, including:

- Knowledge of the CoSA Model (inner and outer circle, community-based, community and volunteer driven, professionally supported)
- Understanding of the principles of CoSA: No More Victims; No One Does This Alone; No One is Disposable
- Friendship and social modelling
- Covenanting
- CoSA Network and CoSA “types” (e.g., organizational structures – DOC, Private/Community-based, Collaborative styles, small agencies, funding sources)
- Experience in recruitment, screening, training and supervision of volunteers
- Volunteer supervision, management, including volunteer appreciation
- Minimally, a very general familiarity criminal offending theory, principles, and practices, such as Risk, Need and Responsivity; Good Lives; Restorative Justice; Civil Commitment, probation and parole supervision
- Knowledge of core member presentation (e.g., sexual deviance, core member characteristics, and what we call, “the basics of sexual offending behavior,” including myths and misconceptions)
- Knowledge of the dynamic associated with victims and survivors and how to access, interact with, and consider the perspectives of victim advocacy groups
- Understanding of how the Criminal Justice System works in your county and state (courts, jails and prisons, probation and parole)

We're not suggesting that you'll need to have all of these ducks in a row before you can even start working on your CoSA project, but you'll need to get up to speed pretty quickly in order to be effective and to deal with the challenges that will come.

What will I be doing?

What you ultimately end up doing as a CoSA Coordinator at various points in the development of your project depends on the developmental stage of your CoSA. That could be anywhere from this is a good idea – to having a home agency without funding in place (you may be spending the first year writing grant applications) – to funding is in place and a physical home (office space, meeting and training space) is ready to move into establishing the CoSA infrastructure (e.g., physical “home” with funding in place, telecommunications set up, Steering Committee in place, volunteer recruitment strategy operationalized, volunteers ready for training, training set up, core member referral mechanisms established, and so forth). If you are starting at the beginning, each of these parts of the “infrastructure” will need to be in place. This list is not necessarily comprehensive, and certainly glosses over the huge amount of work involved in establishing each of these parts.

In **Appendix A**, there is a generic work plan for starting a CoSA. You should become familiar with it, and adapt it to your needs. One of the first stages of development is to “engage” with the community of professionals who are mandated to work with people who have offended, either through law enforcement, correctional incarceration, release and re-entry (e.g., parole and probation officers), and community-based treatment specialists, among others. You will also want to “engage” with other not-for-profit organizations and agencies, including members of the faith community and others who may already be doing similar, “social justice” type work, such as homelessness workers, mental health and addictions counsellors, work placements, and others. You want to connect with local politicians at the county, state and federal level (they may be able to open doors for you), and eventually, you will want to make connections within the business community as well. Another important group of professionals with whom you will want and need to become familiar are those providing advocacy and services to victims and survivors. Being known to and understood by these important service providers will be a key element of establishing and maintaining a healthy CoSA project.

We recommend you try and connect with the leadership from each of these sectors. For instance, you may know a probation officer, but you want to meet with the Director of Probation Services. You will need referrals and heads-up when an eligible core member candidate is due for release, so you want to meet with the head of the local correctional facility (prison, jail, etc.). Your goal is to “engage” the support of these individuals by meeting with them to talk about CoSA and what you and your organization are trying to do. You ask if you can make a formal presentation to their staff at their weekly or monthly meeting.

You will be spending much of your time arranging meeting after meeting, talking about your plans, soliciting support, and inviting local professionals to let you present to their staff, or to attend a professional orientation meeting about CoSA. The idea of a professional orientation meeting brings us to an efficient way to go about this task. Planning what we call a “professional orientation workshop to CoSA” is a way to get everyone in the same room for a single presentation on CoSA. Plan it far enough into the future to allow you to make contact with everyone you need to, and so organizations can put your workshop on their calendars (give them lots of time; schedules are typically busy for these folks). Set a tentative date. Then, if you have not already done so, you should attempt an in-person, face-to-face meeting with someone as high up in the organizational structure as you can, someone who can make or heavily influence decision-making. Make your pitch, and then ask if they would be willing to send several representatives to the professional orientation you are holding on such-and-such a date. Tell them that to be effective, you will need their organization to know about CoSA and be able to support it. How? Keep in mind that government personnel get squeamish when they think you want money. You don’t, we’ll . . . not really; that’s not what you’re here about, and be very quick to point that out (although any offers would not be turned away!). Make sure they understand that they can support you in three ways: by attending the orientation, by having a representative sit on a Steering Committee with others, and finally by providing a one to two-hour training session to your volunteers related to their professional expertise in working with offenders, twice to three times per year. Remind them it’s a great community service opportunity, which is often part of a government organizations mandate. You may need to “work the field” a few times to get there, but your goal in these early stages is to get as many of the mandated service agencies and other “stakeholder” groups to your professional group orientation as possible.

The purpose of the professional orientation is to have as many of the mandated, “stakeholder” professionals in one room as possible, together, to be presented with an overview of CoSA, how it works, with whom it works, and the research and evaluations performed to date attesting to its effectiveness. With everyone together, people get to hear the questions that are raised, and how you respond to them. As well, there’s some small, maybe tentative commitment to CoSA arising from attendance at the orientation session. After the orientation, you will need to follow-up with all those who attended (remember to pass around an attendance sheet so you have everyone’s contact information) and ask them for feedback.

Your ultimate goal is to set up a Steering Committee comprised of these individuals or members of their staff they may appoint, who will help you bring your CoSA project into operation. These are also the people who will provide you with support and accountability as the project gains momentum. The Steering Committee’s job is not so much to act as a governing body, but to help you establish CoSA *in collaboration with* mandated agencies so your project volunteers can offer support and an accountability mechanism for core members, with transparency and input from those who know this population well.

After the orientation, go back and ask those who attended if they would be willing to volunteer or appoint one of their staff to sit on the Steering Committee. For those who didn’t make it to the orientation, follow up as well and see if there’s a way to get copies of the presentation into their hands, and ask whether they would also agree to be on a Steering Committee. In **Appendix C**, there is a segment on the roles and responsibilities of a Steering Committee. We urge you to read it, and develop a point-form summary you can leave with your professional contacts you want to invite to be on the Steering Committee.

While you are getting the professionals on board for an orientation session, you will also be meeting with other not-for-profit organizations, the faith community, and any other groups and organizations you think will help you in your volunteer recruitment campaign. Again, you’ll be spending lots of time in meetings, having coffee, convincing people of the merits of volunteering with CoSA. As one Coordinator asked us, “I spend most of my days drinking coffee with potential volunteers, supporters, and others. Is that what I’m supposed to be doing?” The answer is, “Yes, precisely.” Think of it as gestation. If you need to work with greater focus, set some (realistic) deadlines or target dates for yourself.

- Steering Committee established and first meeting held by (mm-dd-yyyy).
- 15 Volunteers attending first training by (mm-dd-yyyy; and not more than one or two months after the Steering Committee is established).
- First Core Member accepted by (mm-dd-yyyy; and not more than six weeks after your training for volunteers begins;

Let's fast-forward a bit and presume you have been able to accomplish those steps – you have established a “CoSA infrastructure” and have been successful at setting up a referral mechanism for Core Members. Let's say that you have also run one or two volunteer training sessions, and found the following to be more or less true:

- Finding people who think CoSA is a great idea? No problem.
- Finding 20 people who say they're *willing* volunteer AND attend training? Not as easy as it looks.
- Finding people willing to attend training and volunteer on a CoSA? BIG problem!
- Of the 15 who said they will *for sure* attend training, only eight showed up.
- Of the eight who took the training, only four said they're eager to get going. Don't worry, this is par for the course.

At this point, you might be asking yourself, “What am I doing that's wrong? The answer is, “No, this is to be expected, at least in the first year.” In the end you have enough volunteers trained to start one Circle. Volunteer recruiting will be your number one bug-bear, and you need to stay motivated even though the return on investment seems low. Stay focused, keep looking for new opportunities to give talks, attend meetings, or buy someone a coffee.

By year two, word-of-mouth begins to have an effect, and while you may never have a surplus of volunteers, your persistence will ensure you have enough to meet demand.

Some new coordinators ask, “When does the real work begin?” You are doing “the real work” of relationship building and creating some social capital for your CoSA. We hope you are also attending and being invited to the meetings of other groups, so that you can introduce yourself and the concept of CoSA. This is important work. As your volunteer cadre expands and you run more training orientations and programs, be sure to invite the other groups to attend and to participate. Always be on the lookout for ways to collaborate.

Another issue often raised is, “I think I’m failing. We have only two CoSAs active after our first year, and the workplan said we’d have five and be looking at expanding state-wide by our third and fourth year.” This, too, is normal. Make sure your work plan is reasonable and achievable. Setting the bar too high results in missed expectations and feelings of defeat and inadequacy – and you don’t need those. We suggest you aim for your first circle – just one – starting at the end of your first year; maybe even into the middle of your second. There are two issues: one, you need to go slow and make certain you have your entire infrastructure” in place and operational before starting your first circle. The second issue is that no matter how well you plan and follow these guidelines, you will learn a great deal from that first circle – it will teach you lessons unique to your location, volunteers, your organization, and your interface with authorities – lessons you can only learn “on-the-job.” It is our experience that those lessons are best learned in the context of one circle rather than in five. Having learned those lessons, you can move toward the second, third, and fourth circles; again, moving slowly and deliberately. You will learn lessons about circle process, about starting a new circle, closing circles under different circumstances, and about volunteers. We can’t emphasize this often enough: Move slowly and cautiously. What you do in the beginning will color your project moving forward – build a solid foundation.

Now, make sure that you thoroughly read the primary document, *Circles of Support & Accountability: A “How To” Guide for Establishing CoSA in Your Location*.

Good luck in your endeavors.

APPENDIX A

Volunteer Recruitment Work Plan

VOLUNTEERS – WHAT IS DONE	By Whom	Time Frame/ Frequency	Evaluation – How do we know if it’s done?
<p><u>Steering Committee/Boards/Advisory Panel</u> Purpose, Recruitment of, training for, meetings, reporting</p>	<p>This varies depending on the type of organization that exists in any given community; Regional Chaplain, Regional Coordinator, Community Chaplain; Individual interested in coordinating a local CoSA; Local Committee; A Church Pastor; provincial or national agency (e.g., an MCC; John Howard Society, etc.)</p>	<p>Usually done once with renewal or addition of members as needed. Meets monthly, or quarterly and as needed. FOR A NEW, FIRST-TIME PROJECT, WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE FIRST <u>60-90 DAYS</u> OF A PROJECT’S LIFE. IT CAN OVERLAP IN ITS LATER STAGES WITH VOLUNYEER RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND TRAINING (see below).</p>	<p>A functioning steering group, advisory panel or Board of Directors that is <u>representative of the local community</u> (e.g., members are known and credible/ respected members of the community and are drawn from a variety of sectors within the community who may have a stake in the successful functioning of a CoSA project). Is familiar with the basic functioning of CoSA’ believes in the CoSA mission and is willing and able to advocate in the community for that mission; is active (observable) as a <u>sounding</u></p>

<p><u>Volunteer Recruitment Strategy</u> Approach leaders/members of the faith community to make presentations for orientation session. Advertise through local volunteer agencies, media sessions, newspaper stories, church bulletins and newsletters, correctional volunteer programs, universities and college classes.</p>	<p>PRIMARILY: Project Coordinator, assistant, or other designated volunteer or (in larger programs) a designated staff member(s);</p> <p>SOMETIMES: of the steering group/advisory panel/ board of directors; community chaplain, regional chaplain, regional coordinator, word-of-mouth.</p>	<p>Several times each year (often in the Fall and again in early Spring). However, is also ongoing. Application forms are handed out individually upon request, or following an orientation session for prospective volunteers held in conjunction with the volunteer “drive” or other recruiting event.</p> <p>FOR FIRST TIME, NEW PROJECTS, VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT WILL HAPPEN WITHIN THE FIRST 90 DAYS OF PROJECT LIFE, followed by targeted volunteer “drives” once or twice each year following. As demand for circles increases, volunteer recruitment sometimes resembles an ongoing “intake” monthly.</p>	<p>board/problem-solving/advice-giving, and as a responsible oversight and accountability “agent” for the project coordinator.</p> <p>Demand for circles (e.g., offenders needing and asking for a circle at release) is being met with a corps of suitable and trained volunteers;</p> <p>The ongoing “mix” of volunteers (e.g., gender balanced, age balanced, balance between new and experienced volunteers), is capable of meeting the needs of released men who are asking for a CoSA.</p> <p>Volunteers themselves will report that the need for volunteers and the mix of volunteers is</p>
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<p><u>Volunteer Screening</u> Volunteer application form is completed and submitted; background and reference checks, police records checks are performed; volunteer interviews (that follow a predetermined structure so that they are focused and consistent) is conducted; Purpose of screening is among other things to focus on volunteer availability, attitudes, values and beliefs surrounding victims and offenders, criminal justice system agencies and members (e.g., police, crown, corrections, parole, probation),</p>	<p>Volunteer Coordinator, sometimes with a steering group/advisory panel/board member, project assistant, designated staff person and/or senior volunteer and occasionally a “graduate” core member. Local police may assist with free criminal records checks to the local CoSA group. References provided by the applicant are also interviewed.</p>	<p>Within 30 days of an applicant completing and submitting an application form. ALSO WITHIN FIRST 30 DAYS OF RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN FOR FIRST-TIME NEW PROJECTS</p>	<p>satisfactory.</p> <p>No “waiting lists” for core members exists (e.g., under recruiting of suitable volunteers), and volunteers are not waiting around for something to do (over recruiting in excess of demand)– they are able to immediately donate their time as they had planned once they have been trained.</p> <p>A volunteer file has been created for each volunteer. Application form is on volunteer’s file. Results of police record check are documented on file. Background checks are also documented on file. Evidence that appropriate “due diligence” has been exercised by having all screening results</p>
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<p>faith communities (emphasis on the plurality of), media, community (especially knowledge of and engagement with the community), maturity, ability to hold balanced perspectives and achieve balance in personal life</p> <p><u>Volunteer Training</u> To ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarization with legal system as it effects core members and CoSA, particularly information about court orders and other types of orders (e.g., probation/parole orders); - Familiarization with correctional system, especially release practices and community Corrections, how risk is assessed, what are risk and protective factors and how CoSA influences those; - Understanding the need for healthy, respectful and collaborative relationships with agencies and 	<p>Project Coordinator is ultimately responsible for ensuring appropriate and timey volunteer training is conducted regularly. Local professionals and specialists, Regional Coordinator (perspective and experience sharing from other sites and locations) Community and Institutional Chaplains</p>	<p>20-30 hours and thereafter ongoing (procedures listed in CSC documentation available online, in parallel documents prepared by local sites and in documents produced by MCC Canada).</p> <p>Frequency – several times per year and as needed (incidents/identified/specialized needs), volunteer requests, availability of professionals</p> <p>Is always ongoing (e.g., debriefings after circle starts is</p>	<p>documented on the volunteer’s file and the decision to accept or decline the application (and rationale) is also documented on file. This file is kept in a secure environment accessible only to the project coordinator and limited others such that confidentiality is ensured.</p>
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<p>members of the criminal justice system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarization with CoSA mission, principles, processes functions (ongoing) and covenanting with core members; - Familiarization with the dynamics of sex offending (e.g., typologies, antecedents of, factors associated with, patterns, cycles and progressions, cessation of, management of, reoccurrence and reoffending; - Core member needs and assessment of needs (e.g., different classifications of needs) - Familiarization with the dynamics of, patterns of, effects of sexual victimization; needs of victims; concerns of victims; - Instruction in keeping the balance between appreciation of victims needs and core member needs and needs of self as a volunteer; - Borders and boundaries and volunteer safety issues (ongoing) - Specialized instruction for familiarization in topic areas such as addictions and substance use/abuse; mental health and comorbidity; fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and effect; social skills development; vocational and educational issues; 		<p>in session, after incidents, as circle adjusts to length of time out, after critical incidents and/or re-offending, and as circle closes)</p>	
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<p>gender and race issues; healthy relationships (and more as identified)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarization with news media and rudimentary skill development in dealing with media (not an expectation of volunteers). - Familiarization with interpersonal skills development and “what works’ literatures focusing on mentoring relationships with core members; <p><u>Volunteer Deployment</u> Interview with volunteers regarding core member’s history; exposure to core members “file” information to secure “informed consent” to volunteer with a particular core member; Matching (where possible) according to identified strengths weaknesses, safety, volunteer preferences, to balance age, experience, gender</p> <p><u>Volunteer Appreciation</u> Formally at least once per year; ongoing</p> <p><u>Volunteer supervision</u> Co-coordinator attends circle meetings at least once per month and observes, identifies needs for additional training, briefings, and ongoing suitability of each volunteer to be on a particular circle; telephone contact with circle manager/keeper; outer circle identifies</p>			
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<p>needs or raises issues (e.g., police, correctional officials, courts, other agencies); maintaining contact with stakeholders and partners in the community (how are things going?).</p> <p><u>Volunteer retirement</u></p> <p>Exit interviewing (depends on reason – disciplinary, circle closing, change in ability to commit or completion of commitment, mismatching)</p>			
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APPENDIX B

Generic Job Description: CoSA Coordinator

The following description of aspects of CoSA work will be performed under the direction of _____ [appropriate board-level governance] _____:

1. VISIBLE PRESENCE

The CoSA Coordinator will assure an active presence in the community, particularly to CoSA Core Members and potential members, their families and with affiliated staff, professionals and social service agencies that will include:

- Being present and visible throughout the wider community;
- Developing and sustaining relationships with provincial and federal correctional institutions, chaplains, community corrections, other government and non-government agencies, affiliated professionals and social agencies;
- Being present, visible and available within the community and at federal-level correctional institutions, detention Centers where CoSA Core Members and potential members can be contacted;
- Making presentations to local community agencies, offender and ex-offender groups, victims and victim service agencies, faith communities, university classes, and others as requested and as appropriate;
- Referring Core Members to and consulting with appropriate individuals, groups and agencies as required;
- Working closely and collaboratively with correctional staff, local law enforcement and criminal justice professionals in the community, as well as with Institutional and Community Chaplains, and other community-based resources to identify potential Core Members;
- Responding to all media requests according to directions from the local governing body for the CoSA organization.

- Recruiting all volunteers for the inner circle.

The Coordinator will also provide supervision and oversight for CoSA Volunteers and their relationships with Core Members, and arrange for applicable resources for each.

2. CORE MEMBER

The CoSA Coordinator will co-ordinate or deliver CoSA training activities in _____ [local site area] _____, which include, but is not limited to:

- Screening potential Core Members and inviting acceptable candidates to enter into a covenant with the circle;
- Encouraging Core Members to live within covenant agreement by,
 - Disclosing to potential "circle" members the nature of their offense cycle;
 - Disclosing their self-management and release plans;
 - Agreeing to continue to deal with associated issues such as substance abuse or other criminogenic needs upon release to the community;
 - Accepting the limits of what a "circle" can provide;
 - Taking responsibility for their own actions;
 - Being willing to take measures to develop a healthy lifestyle;
 - Entering into appropriate group or individual counseling where possible and when indicated;
- Preparing circle volunteers to respond effectively to Core Members who express a desire to join a faith community, when and where appropriate;
- Preparing circle volunteers to engage and support Core Members as they encounter issues such as forgiveness, guilt, anger, hostility, pain, hurt, power, rage, self-worth, acceptance, death, trust, help, grief and other significant components of human existence and experience, and to seek referrals to professionals in the community who can provide deeper-level support or counselling.

3. EDUCATION/TRAINING

The CoSA Coordinator will coordinate or deliver CoSA training activities, which include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing an adequate volunteer screening/interview process;
- Assuring continuing adequate training programs for volunteers and staff;
- Training volunteers to become effective members of a Circle of Support and Accountability;
- Providing public education to increase community capacity to respond to the needs of the Core Members returning to the community;
- Developing and creating appropriate promotional materials;
- Developing, conducting, supervising, evaluating and modifying various local CoSA activities as appropriate.

4. BUILDING THE NETWORK AND OUTREACH

The CoSA Coordinator must continually develop and sustain a community network and establish effective relationships and resources with individuals, various community agencies, faith groups and non-government agencies. This will provide an opportunity for effective support to Core Members and volunteers as well as a solid base for effective interventions.

Primarily through the Coordinator, the network will be maintained in various ways including:

- Accepting invitations to address groups, lead seminars, and act as the “point person,” or primary contact, and as a resource person to diverse groups at prisons, probation, and parole offices and with others, such as law-enforcement personnel in the community;
- Recruiting, selecting, training and coordinating a volunteer base in order to provide sufficient and effective circles to meet demands brought on by the release of sexual offenders in their community;

- Ensuring that volunteers demonstrate a willingness to:
 - Work from a Restorative Justice framework,
 - Participate in honest communication within a group context,
 - Assist in the practical issues that may face the "Core Member,"
 - Wherever possible and as a preferred process for conflict and dispute resolution, all issues should be resolved with the consensus of the circle,
 - Maintain confidentiality.
- Promote Restorative Justice activities, principles and practices in the community by “walking-the-walk” of restorative justice in their professional capacity as the CoSA Coordinator;
- Advocate for the needs of Core Members, their victims and survivors, and families affected by sexual violence in the community;
- Develop partnerships with the correctional and community professionals for the benefit of offender reintegration;
- Make presentations in prisons and lock-ups for the purpose of developing relationships with offenders to assist them with their reintegration plans;
- Attend meetings and conferences appropriate to the work of the local CoSA organization, and as directed by their governing body;
- Network with appropriate professionals and related community agencies with which the Core Member might be involved.
- Initiate, enter into and maintain a working and constructive dialogue with victim advocacy groups about the CoSA work.

5. EVALUATION

Participating in an annual performance review with the __ [governing body] _____, with feedback from other committees established by the board (e.g., steering committee, advisory

committee, community partners) to develop a CoSA work plan which will:

- Maintain a log indicating the individuals who are potential candidates for a CoSA,
- Maintain a database of community resources available to assist Core Members in their safe re-entry to the community,
- Provide a database of community-based resources willing to work with offenders in the local community,
- Prepare a written report on all “critical incidents,” and submit the report to the ____ [local governance body] _____.
- Help in the preparation of grant proposals and other requests for funding with members of the _____ [local governance] _____,
- Provide an annual report to the _____ [local governance] _____,
- Prepare and administer an annual budget approved by __ [local governance] _____.

6. GOVERNANCE

The CoSA Coordinator will report directly to ____ [local governing body] _____ as well as being a liaison between the inner circle and members of the outer circle. The Coordinator will attend all committee meetings and report all CoSA activities to that body. The Coordinator will solicit professional advice when appropriate regarding circle activities or needs of a Core Members and staff.

Appendix C

Role of Steering Committees and Advisory Panels

What does the “Outer Circle” actually do? Describing this supportive “ring” of professionals has been a handy heuristic. What you would see in a well-functioning Circle might be different from one location to another, and is often dependent on the local governance model. Many CoSA operate as a “program” or service that is part of a larger, often not-for-profit organization that has a Board of Directors, a management or executive group, and so forth. The work of engaging community to provide a CoSA for returning men and women who have been to prison for sex crimes is an area of work and challenge not many people – or organizations – have a lot of experience with. There is a specialized knowledge base for this work, especially when it comes to sexual offenders, and it’s relatively rare in most communities. For this reason, even with larger established organizations, we very strongly recommend identifying and locating that specialized knowledge base, and reaching out to it. The goal in reaching out is to let them know what your plans are, because chances are, you’ll be engaging with the same people they are engaged with in their professional capacity. You may be treated with skepticism at first, at least until you have demonstrated that you are going about setting up your CoSA correctly, including making contact with them. In time, these same professionals will be very happy you are involved. From this “community” of like-minded professionals you will want to obtain knowledge, experience, advice and perhaps some direction that you likely cannot find within your parent organization. Your parent organization will likely want some of that direction and advice as well, if for no other reason than to know and feel confident that they and you are in good hands and talking to the experts. We advise establishing either a Steering Committee or an Advisory Panel to help you in your efforts. In the early, developmental days, you may elect to establish a Steering Committee with a coalition of the willing among the professional community, who may augment your own parent organization’s people who are involved in setting up your CoSA. The Steering Group should be capable of offering sound advice about approaching other professionals, opening doors for you, helping to identify key “stakeholders,” (correctional managers, probation and parole directors, faith community leaders, other like-minded offender support group, victim and survivor advocates, politicians and business interests), and helping to set up meetings with them as you garner support for your project. You will also need a great deal of help recruiting

volunteers, and eventually training them. Members of your Steering Committee should be willing to help where they can, and to loan you their wisdom, support, encouragement, and practical advice. When it comes to volunteer training, you may need space, guest speakers and “trainers” who can attend your sessions and talk about the items you will offer training on (you can refer to the list under volunteer training below). Members of the Steering Committee should be willing to volunteer their time for a one-hour meeting you will call every month for at least the first year as you establish your CoSA. If you or your organization don’t have centralized meeting space for these Steering Committee meetings, one of the Steering Committee members may be able to assist. These people will help you make inter-jurisdictional connections, say between State or County Probation services and the Federal system, or between Tribal authorities and State (and Federal) authorities. They are your key to interacting with treatment providers and specialists. When you hit closed doors, the Steering Committee should be prepared to assist in getting your foot through the door next time. When you are experiencing issues with your Core Member, you would turn to your Steering Committee for direction and advice on how to proceed. The Steering Committee offers direction and advice, and supports your efforts, especially in the early, formative stages of CoSA development. *They are not a governance body*, and accrue no liability for such. However, in a symbolic fashion, they offer you and the CoSA project a level of accountability: if they lose confidence in you or the CoSA and back away, that becomes a powerful message to the community. If they support you, that, too, is a powerful message to the community in terms of should they also place their trust in you. The Advisory Panel (or Committee), operates in an almost identical way, except they may not be asked to provide much in the way of direction. Their role is advisory. The Steering Committee may evolve into an Advisory Committee in time. Their role is to meet regularly (minimally once per quarter, and then as needed should a critical need arise). As you will have become in the habit of doing with a Steering Committee if you started out with one, you would “report” your recent activities to the Advisory Committee – being careful to protect anonymity where you must, you would report on how many volunteers you have, how many recruitment sessions you have established, training sessions, how many circles you are running, how many meetings have taken place, have there been difficulties, how have you managed them, have any circles closed, and if so, for what reasons, what successes have you been able to celebrate, and so forth.

Sample Training Topics

The following volunteer training topics are suggested:

- * Overview of the criminal justice system in your jurisdiction – State or Federal
- * Probation and parole conditions and other court orders
- Restorative justice
- * Needs of survivors
- * Effects of institutionalization
- * Human sexuality and sexual deviance (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- * Risk assessment (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- * Core member needs assessment
- * Working with persons with special needs (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- The CoSA model and its functions and processes (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- Boundaries and borders
- Conflict resolution
- * Group dynamics and building group cohesion
- * Substance abuse and impulse control (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- * Crisis response and preparing for critical incident stress
- * Self-Care and Burnout (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- * Working with correctional officials, police, news media and other community professionals
- Building a covenant (see Appendix and Video of main report)
- Closing a circle
- Other topics as necessary

** Asterisked topics are those that we strongly recommend you approach relevant professionals in your community to come and address with your volunteers.*