



Spencer J. Cox

Governor

Deidre Henderson

Lieutenant Governor

# State of Utah

## Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Tom Ross

*Executive Director*

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### SEX OFFENSE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SOMAC)

Monday, May 12, 2025 - 11:00am – 1:00pm

### MINUTES (DRAFT)

#### In attendance:

- **In person:** Mark Mofat
- **Virtually:** Blake Murdoch, Blake Hills, Kevin Barlow, Jennifer Browns
- **Staff:** SOMAC Director Michele Leslie, Sentencing Commission Director Dan Strong, Office for Victims of Crime Director Chyleen Richey, Indigent Defense Commission Director Matthew Barraza, Director, Victim Services Commission Director Marlesse Jones, Katie Fox, Danica Bodley.

#### I. Welcome - Michele Leslie, Director

Dr. Leslie welcomed everyone to SOMAC.

Dr. Leslie updated the group on upcoming membership changes:

- Sarah Owen's seat is currently vacant and VSC is in the process of selecting a replacement.
- A new member is expected to join through Tony Graf's recommendation.

#### II. SOMAC Interim - Michele Leslie, Director

New Website Initiative:

- Goal: Create a centralized platform under the CCJJ website for offender treatment and management-related boards and committees.
- Proposed name: Behavior and Treatment Management Division.

Purpose:

- To consolidate information and serve as a “one-stop shop” for:
  - SOMAC (Sex Offense Management and Accountability Committee)
  - DVOT (Domestic Violence Offender Treatment Board)

Structure of the Website:

- Two main tabs:
  - One for SOMAC
  - One for DVOT

Content and Features:

- Member information (including who's on SOMAC)
- Background and history:
  - Development from SOMAC
  - Goals and CCJJ affiliation
- Public notifications:
  - Meeting schedules, minutes, Handouts, Subcommittee updates, Key outputs or materials from subcommittees
- Resources section:
  - Credentialed treatment provider info
  - Links to other entities like the Sex Offense Task Force (under UDC)
  - Clarifies the relationship between SOMAC and related bodies
- Research repository:
  - Focus on public education
  - Availability of research materials relevant to offender management and treatment
- Trainings, conferences, and learning opportunities will be posted and updated regularly.

### **Domestic Violence Offender Treatment Board (DVOT) – Overview**

- What it is: A board focused on improving assessment and treatment practices for domestic violence (DV) offenders in Utah.
- Why it was created:
  - Addressed a gap in standardized treatment and risk assessment for DV offenders in the state.
  - Recognized a lack of clarity on what best practices are for assessing and treating this population—not necessarily a shortage of services, but a lack of consistency and evidence-based direction.
- Key responsibilities:
  - Credentialing providers who are approved to deliver DV treatment in Utah.
  - Developed a credentialing process and a list of approved providers through a subcommittee.
- Differences from other bodies:
  - DVOT has more authority compared to boards like SOMAC because it handles provider credentialing directly, unlike SOMAC where that role falls under the Sex Offense Task Force at UDC.
- Current initiative:
  - Looking for an appropriate and public-facing platform (e.g., CCJJ website) to host the provider list and related resources.
- Board representation:
  - There's a recognized need to ensure representation from different professional perspectives, and efforts are underway to improve this

### **III. SOMAC Updates – Michele Leslie, Director**

The last legislative session emphasized the importance of SOMAC's role in public education, specifically:

- Communicating how SOMAC's work contributes to increasing public safety.



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- Clarifying misconceptions—SOMAC has always aimed at public safety, but the path hasn't always been clearly understood.
- There is a recognized need to better educate stakeholders and the public about:
  - The population SOMAC serves
  - How its recommendations are research-based and grounded in long-term public safety outcomes

### Legislative Initiative – Data Collection with UDC

- A bill was passed mandating data collection with Utah Department of Corrections (UDC).
  - While tools like Static-99R and Stable-2007 were discussed, they were not explicitly written into the bill to allow flexibility based on findings.
  - This initiative will be a major focus for SOMAC this year.

### Interim Action Ideas for SOMAC

While awaiting data, SOMAC is considering short-term efforts to move progress forward:

- Registry Education Pamphlet:
  - A practical resource for individuals placed on the sex offender registry.
  - Contents might include:
    - Registration requirements
    - When and how to update information (e.g., address changes, new vehicle)
    - Rules for out-of-state travel
  - Overview of restrictions
  - Acknowledged that due to the volume of restrictions, the final product may need to be more extensive than just a pamphlet.

**Office for Victims of Crime Director Chyleen Richey** asked whether there has been an analysis of Utah's sex offender registry policies through an evidence-based lens, particularly to determine if the restrictions and registration durations (e.g., 5–10 years or lifetime) are supported by research. She questioned whether some restrictions might actually be ineffective, overly burdensome, or even counterproductive, possibly contributing to relapse or stigma. She acknowledged that a comprehensive review might be a big undertaking but wondered if there were leverage points or smaller areas where such analysis had already been done or could be done.

- **Dr. Leslie** responded that these exact concerns were part of the reason SOMAC (formerly SOMB) was created. In its first year, SOMAC focused heavily on evaluating the registry,

which led to proposed changes. However, those proposals prompted feedback that the board should take incremental steps. She noted that a significant body of research already suggests issues with the registry's effectiveness, but there were concerns about whether that research applies to Utah specifically. This led to the recent data collection bill, which aims to gather Utah-specific information.

- **Dr. Leslie** clarified that while risk is part of the data, the effort goes beyond that—collecting both static and dynamic risk factors—to ensure the approach isn't overly simplistic or reliant on just one number. The broader goal is to determine whether national and international research findings align with Utah's own data, and to use that to guide future policy.

**Sentencing Director Dan Strong** suggested that SOMAC should proactively reach out to legislators who have shown interest in registry-related issues to understand what concerns they're hearing from constituents and what policy ideas they're exploring. He noted that during the last legislative session, many bills emerged without a strong research foundation, leading to frustration. Rather than initiating proposals that may trigger political pushback, he recommended positioning SOMAC as a neutral research resource that can support data-backed proposals or stay out of those that lack alignment. He emphasized that re-engaging policymakers—especially as fewer now serve on commissions—could help build long-term relationships, bring proposals to SOMAC for analysis, and strengthen the group's relevance in shaping informed policy.

**Dr. Leslie** provided an update on one of SOMAC's two major focus areas: treatment standards (the other being registry reform).

- She noted that UDC will soon implement a new treatment program for individuals convicted of possession of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM).
  - She and Jared (UDC) are collaborating on this effort.
  - This work builds on a treatment module released in the past year and aims to integrate it with updated programming tailored to the needs of this population.
- Dr. Leslie emphasized that individuals convicted of CSEM offenses present different risk factors compared to those with contact or hands-on offenses.
  - Developing effective, research-based treatment specific to this population is a high priority.
- The Treatment Standards Subcommittee will also resume work on:
  - Bridging the gap between incarceration-based and community-based treatment programs.  
Current challenges include inconsistent language, goals, and program structure between the two settings.
  - The goal is to improve continuity of care, allowing individuals to transition smoothly from prison to community treatment without feeling they are restarting the process.
- A pressing issue is that many incarcerated individuals are awaiting treatment, which is necessary before they can be considered for community release. This adds urgency to the development and implementation of coordinated treatment pathways.



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**Dr. Leslie** noted that one of SOMAC's key goals this interim is to refine treatment standards by balancing offender risk with the broader social impact of the offense. She emphasized the importance of addressing not just the individual's level of risk, but also the ripple effects their actions have on others. She also stressed the need to bridge the gap between incarceration-based and community-based treatment, ensuring a smoother transition and continuity of care for individuals reentering the community.

**Victim Services Commission Director Marlesse Jones** reflected on how public perception—shaped largely by media portrayals of crime—can distort the reality of offender behavior, especially with populations like those convicted of CSEM possession. Society often equates these individuals with hands-on offenders due to sensationalized narratives, which fuels fear and overreactions in both policy and public response. She called for a shift toward evidence-based education that acknowledges nuance and avoids reinforcing stigmas, recognizing that while no strategy guarantees safety, thoughtful and research-informed approaches are crucial for long-term public protection.

**Office for Victims of Crime Director Chyleen Richey** proposed using the Sequential Intercept Model to map the full range of interventions and policies related to sexual offenses—from early prevention efforts like school-based education ("good touch, bad touch") to incarceration for high-risk individuals. This approach would help visualize the different types of offenses and responses, highlight the diverse populations served, and show how current policies target various stages and audiences.

**Sentencing Commission Director Dan Strong** provided updates on recent developments related to SOMAC and registry reform, noting that while interest remains high, there is still little consensus on the path forward. He referenced a point raised by Jeff Buhman from the prosecutors' group, suggesting there may be specific areas of the registry that could garner broad agreement across stakeholders.

- Dan Strong emphasized the importance of continuing engagement with law enforcement, victim advocates, and prosecutors, particularly if proposals originate from those groups, as they could gain traction more quickly.
- He also highlighted ongoing concerns with the registry beyond risk classification, such as whether it is accurately tracking individuals. While nationally validated tools like Static-99R exist, Utah policy makers often want local data to support policy shifts. Strong

stressed that it will take time to collect meaningful recidivism data, but discussions should continue in the meantime—perhaps exploring less controversial ways to incorporate risk, such as noting risk levels alongside offenses on the public registry. Ultimately, he encouraged ongoing collaboration and keeping SOMAC positioned as a research-informed resource for policymakers.

**Dr. Leslie** outlined the key issues surrounding Utah’s sex offender registry, highlighting concerns that it may serve as a form of ongoing punishment, especially since it’s conviction-based rather than risk-based—potentially misrepresenting the actual threat individuals pose. She also noted the low recidivism rates among this population, prompting questions about the registry’s overall effectiveness. However, she acknowledged the opposing perspective that the registry offers long-term reassurance and safety for victims and the public.

- In response, **Office for Victims of Crime Director Chyleen Richey** emphasized the lack of a clearly defined purpose for the registry, questioning whether it is meant as punishment or a public safety tool. She expressed concern that the registry might actually undermine reintegration and increase recidivism, and pointed out the inconsistency of applying this level of ongoing consequence to sex offenses but not to other serious crimes. Richey called for more research and evaluation to determine whether the registry is truly achieving its intended goals.
- **Victim Services Commission Director Marlesse Jones** built on Chyleen’s point by emphasizing that, from a public safety perspective, the registry can create an incomplete and potentially misleading sense of security. Marlesse clarified that while the registry doesn’t necessarily create a false sense of safety, it does carry the risk of offering an incomplete one—people may believe their community is safe if no one appears on the registry, overlooking the reality that unregistered or undetected offenders may still be present.

#### **IV. Public comment**

A public commenter emphasized the need for better data collection on risk assessments,

#### **V. Adjourn**

Dr. Leslie adjourned the meeting.

**Next Meeting (tentative):  
Wednesday, July 16, 2025**