

Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office Corrections Division



2021 Annual PREA Report



BACKGROUND

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2003 to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse that occurs in confinement settings. The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission developed national standards for reducing prison rape, which became final on June 20, 2012, when they were published by the Department of Justice (D.O.J.) in the Federal Register. PREA applies to adult prisons and jails, juvenile confinement facilities, lockups, and community confinement facilities.

Implementation of the PREA Standards in combating sexual abuse in confinement facilities will be contingent upon effective agency and facility leadership, and the development of an agency's principles prioritizing efforts to combat sexual abuse. The prevention of rape, sexual assault, or sexual misconduct is a top priority for the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office. We have a zero tolerance for any incidence of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003.

APPROACH

The Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office Corrections Division has long supported the principles associated with the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. Respectively, years before the passing of the PREA guidelines, the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office strictly enforced a zero tolerance policy of sexual misconduct within its' facilities for all staff, offenders, volunteers, and contractors; implemented methods of screening all offenders at intake for potential sexual victimization or predatory indicators; and has had policies to ensure that incidents of sexual assaults were investigated and prosecuted in accordance with federal and state laws.

Since the new PREA guidelines were established, the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office has updated departmental policies and implemented new ones in an effort to maintain compliance with all aspect of the federal standards. Some of the new changes include: required annual mandatory sexual misconduct training to all staff, volunteers, and contractors, specific to the prevention, identification, reporting, and handling of offender sexual misconduct/sexual assault, including common indicators of misconduct; revised policies relating to sexual abuse and misconduct; created a PREA Coordinator position to further develop, implement, and oversee our efforts to comply with the new PREA standards. Furthermore, OPSO has given offenders access to an external PREA Hotline as an independent outlet to report incidents of sexual abuse and receive advocacy support that is equal to that available to the community.

DEFINITIONS

Once a report of sexual abuse has been investigated, the incident will be assigned a number and the disposition will be documented on an Ouachita Parish Corrections Division Report and classified using one of the following findings:

Substantiated: Allegation investigated and the investigation indicated that the alleged event did occur.

Unsubstantiated: Allegation investigated and insufficient evidence to make a determination as to whether or not event occurred.

Unfounded: Allegation is investigated and investigation indicated alleged event did not occur.

Ongoing/Pending: Investigation is ongoing.

The Ouachita Parish Corrections Division defines sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as the following:

A. Offender on Offender

- a. **Sexual Abuse:** Includes any of the following acts if the offender does not consent or was coerced into such act by overt or implicit threats of violence; or is unable to consent or refuse:
 - aa. **Non-consensual Sexual Acts:** Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight. Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus; or penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument.
 - ba. **Abusive Sexual Contact:** Intentional non-penetrative touching, either directly or through the clothing of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of another person, excluding contact incidental to a physical altercation.
- b. **Sexual Harassment:** Repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one offender directed toward another.

B. Staff Member, Volunteer, Official Visitor, or Other Agency Representative on Offender

- a. **Sexual Abuse:** Includes any of the following acts, with or without consent of an offender. Sexual relationships of a romantic nature between staff members, official visitors, volunteers, or other agency representatives and offenders are included in this definition.
 - aa. **Sexual Misconduct:** Any attempt, threat, request, or intentional contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration of the anal or genital opening of an offender, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument, excluding contact incidental to a medical examination.
 - aaa. Sexual misconduct also includes occurrences of indecent exposure, invasion of privacy, or staff voyeurism for reasons unrelated to official duties or where there is intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify a sexual desire.
- b. **Sexual Harassment:** Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to an offender by a staff member, official visitor, volunteer, or other agency representative, including demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures.

PREA ACTIVITY REPORT

Offenders may confidentially disclose incidents of sexual abuse and sexual harassment to any staff member, either verbally, in writing, or by calling the 24 hour Sexual Assault Center Hotline or *511 (OCC) from any of the phones located in the offender housing units. This process allows for the confidential reporting by offenders 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Administrative investigation shall be completed no later than 90 days of the initial filing of a complaint or grievance; or within 5 days of filing an emergency grievance.

***PREA was officially instituted for all OPSO facilities on November 14, 2016.**

PREA Statistics from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021.

Available upon formal request

ASSESSMENT

After reviewing all of PREA incidents reported between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021, it was determined that there are no changes in policies or procedures needed. There were no physical barriers identified that were not supplemented by video surveillance or security checks and staffing levels were determined to be adequate. The Corrections Division is taking steps to provide more training to staff on investigations specifically related to PREA and encourages staff to interact with and educate offenders on how to prevent sexual abuse. The Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office will continue to make appropriate changes where necessary to ensure a safe, secure environment for offenders, staff, and the community.

BREAK THE SILENCE REPORT SEXUAL ABUSE

IF YOU, A FRIEND, OR SOMEONE YOU
KNOW HAS BEEN THREATENED OR HAS
BEEN THE VICTIM OF SEXUAL ABUSE, WE
CAN HELP!

To Report Sexual Abuse Contact:
Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office
318-324-2650

OR

The Wellspring Alliance for Families
318-323-1505
1904 ROYAL AVE.
MONROE, LA 71201