



Newsletter October 2020



From the Director's Desk

Andy O

Hello and welcome to October. As I write this, the temperature is in the 40's, and the air is turning crisp. Halloween is at the end of the month, and what effect the virus is going to have on it is unknown. Please see our featured articles on the subject.

Also, be aware that our leadership is putting in a lot of effort to continuously bring topnotch speakers and informative topics to our bi-monthly Spotlight calls. Please try to join us for some of these. The hour will be worth your while. We are now using Zoom exclusively and will put out instructions prior to each call. You may connect with a computer or your phone, and you may turn off the video if you would prefer not to be seen. Since we are scattered all over the state, being able to see each other in real time versus a phone call has been great to better connect, but it is understood if you prefer otherwise.

NARSOL, our parent organization has begun two new online enterprises. The first is [NARSOL Resources](#). There you will find state by state resources on crisis lines, education, employment, financial help, housing, prison and

re-entry, support groups, and victim issues. Check it out.

NARSOL has also launched a Facebook-like social media site called [Connections](#). Connections has the look and feel of Facebook and is intended to provide a way for people on the registry to socially interact. If you are craving social interaction with a group of people who understand what you deal with, this platform may be perfect for you. Once connected, you can invite sympathetic friends and family members. This is a site for sharing and socializing. Since it is by invitation only, please let us know if you are interested.



Our August Spotlight call featured Michael McKay, NARSOL's Director of Marketing. He explained how to use the media to accomplish your organization's mission while avoiding the most common traps that can be catastrophic for your cause. It was quite interesting and informative. He also talked about the two new NARSOL online ventures.

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Zoom with Donna K. Thompson

Director, OK Baptist State Convention Prison Ministry – October 13, 2020



A way to get involved in your community

By Wayne B

The upcoming October Spotlight Call hosted by Zoom by OKRSOL is going to take a look at how registrants can register and vote after finishing their sentence. Donna Thompson, Director of Oklahoma Baptist State Convention Prison Ministry, is making it her mission to educate those with felonies to know that they can vote and help them determine when they will be eligible to register.

Thompson will speak by Zoom on the OKRSOL meeting on Tuesday, October 13th at 7:30 PM, to explain the guidelines on how a person computes their sentence and when they can register. She will also take questions from people participating. We encourage you to learn how you can become eligible as your sentence closes.

Ms. Thompson is very active within the community helping those who have felonies, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, and their families. She works to assist with

prevention, intervention, stability, and aftercare. Ms. Thompson assists with the Angel Tree Program to assist children whose parents are incarcerated.

Ms. Thompson is an advocate to help educate those who have felony convictions understand their rights to register and vote. She provides presentations, literature and workshops to distribute this information to churches, organizations, and the community. Ms. Thompson is active in the legislative process to help ensure our community is informed on bills that help and/or hurt our community.

Coming out of prison can be difficult. There are requirements to follow – parole/probation officer meeting, setting up therapy, getting registration started, and those are just tasks involving the completion of incarceration and the return to society. There are personal issues – getting a home, getting a job, reconnecting with family and with society. There is much to do, and it can seem extremely lonely.

Many registrants feel left out, ignored, and shamed. There is a good way to confront those feelings. Everyone who has experienced the prison industrial complex in some manner realize what a big failure in many ways it is. A good way to help changes to occur is to get involved in state and local democracy. Are you aware you can regain your right to vote? Maybe this is a civic duty that you have never participated. Having a vote is the most basic of everyone's involvement as a citizen and the ability to help in making change and improvement.

The simple math process is to take a person's sentencing date, add the length of the sentence and when that is over, a person can register. Not only should we encourage registrants to register, but to encourage their family and friends to become civically involved and register and vote. We can have a large coalition in the state if every

person leaving prison will make this move, and their circle of support.

A reminder that the deadline to register for the upcoming general election is Oct. 9th. Remember, there are more political races to get involved besides the national races. The state senate and house of representatives have an immediate impact on the laws in the state, and on a local level, city council and school board races have a lot to do with where you live. Hopefully, you will find this gratifying to get involved.

To join us on this call, use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83050370663> and enter meeting ID **830 5037 0663** when prompted and **951384** for the passcode. If you choose to connect with a phone, dial one of the following numbers: **346-248-7799** or **312-626-6799**. We hope to have you there with us.



Trick or treat

By Andy O

It is that time of year again. On the last day of October, children all over the state will get to engage in one of the favorite activities of the year – going door to door and demanding candy. What better feeling than to see your son or daughter’s smiling faces covered with chocolate. As much delight it brings the children, it is a source of dread for registrants. Should I participate with my children? Is it alright to give out candy to neighborhood kids? Will someone see me walking my kids down the block and call the cops? Will I be one of those “red dots” on a map of places to avoid?

If you are under supervision, the answer is no, you cannot participate. Some states even have required programs for probationers during this time. Even Oklahoma has done this in the past. If you are not under supervision, technically you can participate. However, many of our members choose to disappear for the evening just to be safe (not safe from harming a child which is a non-issue but safe from getting into trouble). After all, everybody knows that Halloween is an incredibly dangerous time with bad guys lurking about to snatch little ones or molest them on their front doorsteps.

Wait a minute. Turns out that not a single child has been abused by a registrant on Halloween – ever. In fact, sex crimes against children on Halloween are no different than on any other day. OKRSOL has joined the other NARSOL affiliates in signing an open letter entitled STOP the Red Dots. It says in part:

Every year as Halloween approaches, many Patch media outlets, as well as others, publish articles featuring “red-dot” maps showing addresses, and sometimes names, of persons listed on sexual offense registries. Within the last few years, this practice has been adopted by some local police departments on their Facebook pages. According to the editors and publishers of such pieces, this is done in order to help protect children who will be trick or treating at Halloween.

This letter has been sent to numerous media outlets across the country as well as Oklahoma. Statistics also show that it is three times more likely for a child to be injured by an automobile on Halloween than any other day of the year. So, if we really want to make an impact on Halloween child safety, we should ban driving for the day.

Please read the article published in journal of *Research and Treatment* entitled Sex crimes on

Halloween which is included in summary in this newsletter. One definite takeaway from this article – nobody will care. So, feel free to join my wife and I at the Village Inn for a quiet dinner on the 31st.

Sex crimes on Halloween

	Mark Chaffin ▶ University of Oklahoma
	Jill Levenson ▶ Lynn University
	Elizabeth Letourneau ▶ Medical University of South Carolina
	Paul Stern ▶ Snohomish, WA

Purpose of the Study

States, municipalities, and parole departments have adopted policies banning known sex offenders from Halloween activities, based on the concern that there is unusual risk on this day. Whether or not there is actually a measured elevation in child sex crime risk on Halloween is unknown. The purpose of this study was to empirically examine whether the rate of sex crimes against children on Halloween differs from what we would expect on any given day.

Methods

National incident-based reporting system (NIBRS) crime report data from 1997 through 2005 were used to examine daily population adjusted rates from 67,045 non-familial sex crimes against children age 12 and younger. Halloween rates were compared to expectations based on time, seasonality and weekday periodicity.

Results

There were no significant increases in sex crimes on or around Halloween, and Halloween incidents did not evidence unusual case characteristics. Findings did not vary across

years prior to and after these policies became popular.

If these policies produced a net effect over time on overall Halloween victimization, we would expect that the rates of offenses on Halloween would show greater decline over time relative to the rates for other days. In order to test whether there may have been greater reductions in sex offense rates on Halloween relative to other days over the nine-year span, a year-by-Halloween interaction term was added to the model. No statistically significant differences were found.

In order to contextualize sex crimes against children we examined over 5 million victimizations that took place in 30 states on or around Halloween in 2005. The most common types of crime from among the incidents reported on Halloween and adjacent days were theft (32%), destruction or vandalism of property (21%), assault (19%) and burglary (9%). Vandalism and property destruction accounted for a greater proportion of crime around Halloween compared to other days of the year (21% vs. 14% of all reports). Sex crimes of all types accounted for slightly over 1% of all Halloween crime. Non-familial sex crimes against children age 12 and under accounted for less than .2% of all Halloween crime incidents.

Figure 1: Observed daily counts, aggregated across years, with reference line at Halloween.

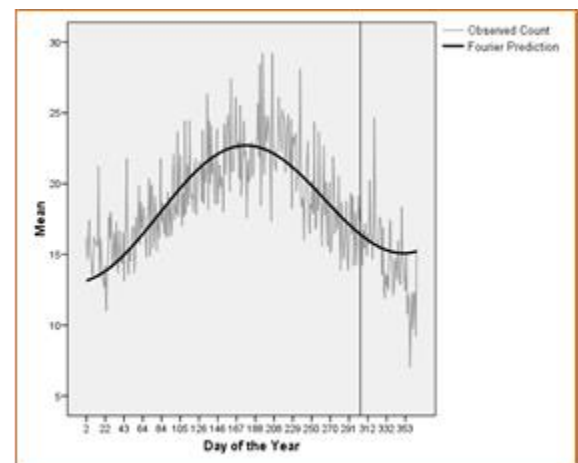
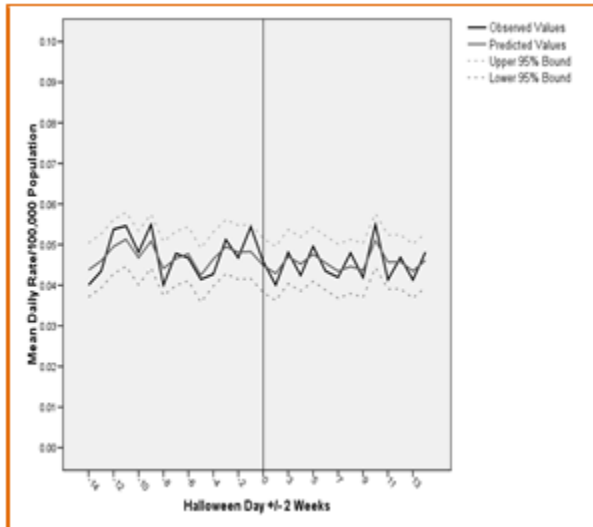


Figure 2: Observed Rates vs. Predicted Rates for the Month Surrounding Halloween. Reference line at Halloween.



Conclusions

This study found no significant increase in risk for non-familial child sexual abuse on or around Halloween. Sexual molesters sometimes use seemingly innocent opportunities to engage children for sexual abuse and therefore might be expected to use trick-or-treat for ulterior purposes. However, this logic does not appear to translate into an increase in sex offenses around Halloween. The absence of a Halloween effect remained constant over the nine year period, beginning well before the current interest in Halloween sex offender policies and extending to recent years. Any Halloween policies that have been adopted by reporting jurisdictions during that period appear not to have impacted the overall sex offense rate.

Halloween was also typical of other days in terms of victim and offender characteristics, the types of child sex offenses reported, and the categories of victim-offender relationships involved. Children are sexually abused on Halloween, just not at higher than expected rates for any other autumn day. Reasonable parental supervision and vigilance on Halloween is appropriate, but there does not appear to be

cause for alarm concerning sexual abuse risk in particular. Increased vigilance concerning risk should be directed to the summer months, where regular seasonal increases in sex crimes are readily seen.

Other risks to children are more salient on Halloween. According to the Center for Disease Control, children ages 5 to 14 are four times more likely to be killed by a pedestrian/motor-vehicle accident on Halloween than on any other day of the year. Regarding criminal activity on Halloween, theft and vandalism are particularly common. Sex crimes against children by non-family members account for two out of every thousand Halloween crimes, calling into question the justification for diverting law enforcement resources on that day away from more prevalent public safety concerns.

Authors' Note

This report is a summary of a research article published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal:

Chaffin, M., Levenson, J. S., Letourneau, E., & Stern, P. (2009). *How Safe Are Trick-or-Treaters? An Analysis of Child Sex Crime Rates on Halloween*. *Sexual Abuse: Journal of Research and Treatment*, 21(3).

Comments or requests for information regarding the study should be directed to:

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My Story...

I was convicted of a misdemeanor sex offense in Texas thirteen years ago and spent ten years on the Texas registry. I failed to register when I moved to Oklahoma and was arrested on a federal charge for violating SORNA. When I was released back to OK, I had to register as a SO and start all over again. I am now five plus years into a 15-year registration period.

Sometimes I think of the unfairness of the system — especially how it impacts my family, but I have only myself to blame. So, I tend to remain positive for this, too, shall pass. I have been on federal probation since 2015 and only have five more months to go. I have been and remain active in an offender treatment program, and I am a member of OKSOL. I have taken graduate courses online and have earned two master’s degrees. I am a novelist with four books published and working on a fifth. I have

maintained a good relationship with my PO having done nothing to violate my probation.

Just as importantly, I have a good relationship with my supervising agency. Living within the law and getting ahold of my emotions and sexual proclivities has made me a better husband and father. I have worked for some wonderful people and enjoy their trust and friendship.

There is no secret to this. Maintaining a positive attitude, accepting blame for my actions, and always living “in the moment” where I think about how I’m feeling and how I should respond has helped me to live a quiet and simple life. I don’t dwell on the past but rather plan for the future always keeping my eye on the prize of the day when I will no longer be a registered person. I don’t let my situation rule me. I rule it as much as possible. Yes, I live under certain restrictions, but that’s the way it is. My faith and the love of family and friends is my strength for soldiering on with the knowledge that this, too, will pass.

Do you have a story to tell?

Contact us at ok-rsol.org/contact or call 405-294-4299 and tell us about it.



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