



An Overview of Community Service for Sex Buyers in the United States

**Summary Based Upon
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“A National Assessment
of Prostitution and Sex
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An Overview of Community Service for Arrested Sex Buyers in the United States

Community service programs are among the less frequently used interventions that target the buyers of sex, although they have a relatively long history of being used in some areas. In most of the 50 cities and counties known to use community service for arrested johns, including the “early adopters” of this tactic listed in Table 1, the service programs are not very precisely targeted toward addressing demand, but instead appear to be sanctions applied to misdemeanor’s in general, and are considered appropriate to apply to the buyers of sex as misdemeanants. For example, sex buyers arrested in a recent reverse sting in Coralville, Iowa were given a one-year deferred sentence involving probation and a requirement to complete 50 hours of community service. Arrestee’s records for the offenses are cleared if they don’t commit another violation during the year of probation, and if they complete their community service obligation.

Community service in some locations is programmatic and specifically designed to deal with demand. For example, the Red Zone program in **Indianapolis** couples a john school intervention with community service specifically designed for them. After four hours of hearing from a community impact panel and a health educator in the john school, the men are required to pick up trash around the streets known to be “strips” with high levels of prostitution activity. Men frequently encounter used condoms and syringes that often accompany street prostitution, and that is by design. Documents regarding the Red Zone program, including instructions for arrestees entering community service, are provided in our web page for Indianapolis at the Demandforum.net website, and in the site’s “john school” page. The type of service required is more variable in **Norfolk**, Virginia than it is in Indianapolis. In Norfolk, johns are added to community service details established for all kinds of low-level offenders, and perform a range of jobs such as painting buildings and cleaning public areas. More detail about the Norfolk program is provided below.

Year	City or County	State
1975	Miami	FL
1980	High Point	NC
1981	Grand Rapids	MI
1981	Little Rock	AR
1985	Chattanooga	TN
1991	Eugene	OR
1991	Pawtucket	RI
1992	Kingsport	TN
1993	Coffee County	TN
1993	Palm Beach County	FL
1994	Austin	TX
1995	Santa Cruz	CA
1997	Waynesville	NC
1998	Tucson	AZ
1999	Wichita	KS

Example 1: Community Service Program for Sex Buyers in Norfolk, Virginia

In the program of the Norfolk Sheriff's Office, sex buyers are required to serve eight hours of community service. It usually occurs on a Sunday and begins between 7:30-8:00 AM. The community service program for johns is coupled with the john school, a brief educational intervention that occurs on the previous day. If the john school gets out early on Saturday, then the johns will sometimes pick up trash downtown for an hour or so and then continue the next day. On the full day of community service, johns are added to community service details for other kinds of low-level offenders, and perform a range of jobs such as painting buildings and cleaning public areas.

The kinds of service details that occur are driven by civic leagues. The Sheriff's Office sends out press releases and mass emails every six months about whom to contact at the Sheriff's Office about community service they would like performed. The civic league president makes the request, and the sites that would make use of the community service labor must be the city, the state, or a nonprofit 501c3 organization.

A Norfolk Sheriff's Office Major and other supervisors review the requests; particularly important is ensuring that the sites selected to receive the service are appropriate - they use GIS and mapping to ensure that it is city, state, or nonprofit. When a candidate site is questionable, the Major goes on-site to examine the situation. For example, with requests for landscaping, carpentry, or cutting down trees in wetlands, they must ensure that there is a valid permit in place for that action.

Also important is making the best use of the community service labor, and ensuring public safety while it is being performed. When the sex buyers (and others) show up for community service, they have to sign in and complete an application/interview. The Sheriff's Office staff can see if they have some particular skills and can assign them to suitable types of tasks (especially where carpentry, painting, or operating equipment are concerned). Types of community service to which sex buyers can be assigned:

- Cleaning the grounds of schools, parks, soccer fields, football fields
- Painting
- Carpentry
- Unloading food and supplies for the local zoo, and some zoo cleanup
- Putting up tents, tables, and chairs for public events

Norfolk usually has about 75 individuals doing community service every Saturday and Sunday, and about 60 every week day. Sex buyers are charged \$15 per day for a supervision fee while performing community service.

The community service program is designed by the Sheriff's Office for all types of offenders. It is not a service program that has been created for sex buyers specifically. Sex buyers are funneled into the Sunday weekend crew of the larger community service program, after attending the Johns School class on the previous Saturday. However, the Sheriff's Office will often assign johns to community service details in the area where they were arrested to make the point that they have to give back to the community that they have harmed in various ways, such as by providing the revenue stream for local commercial sex markets, and drawing pimps and drug dealers to neighborhoods. They may also

avoid sites that may be sensitive to having arrested sex buyers on their grounds, such as a public daycare center or domestic violence shelter.

Example 2: Community Service as a Diversion Option in La Crosse, Wisconsin

In August, 2012 La Crosse police posted a decoy internet ad and placed an undercover team in a hotel. Five men who offered to pay for sex with the police decoy were arrested. The arrestees were able to gain release from custody by posting a \$200 bond meant to assure their court appearance. In October 2012, the first man to plead guilty was fined \$505. In November 2012, one of the arrested men entered a plea agreement allowing him to avoid a conviction if he complied with a diversion agreement.¹ The man plead guilty in La Crosse County Circuit Court to misdemeanor prostitution, but the charge will be dismissed in one year if he pays a fine, completes 25 hours of community service, attend both individual and group treatment, writes an essay about what he learned, and avoids new crimes. We are uncertain about whether the "group treatment" would qualify as a john school program. If the conditions of the diversion agreement are not met, the john could face up to a \$10,000 dollar fine, nine months in jail, or both.

References

References for the materials cited in this summary can be found in the bibliography of the National Assessment final report, and in each site's webpage at DemandForum.net.

¹ http://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/rd-man-gets-diversion-deal-in-prostitution-sting/article_03057d1e-2d55-11e2-ad0b-0019bb2963f4.html

<http://www.wxow.com/story/20076904/man-pleads-guilty-to-prostitution-charge>