

State begins review of sex offender system

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press | Posted: Thursday, August 6, 2015 9:44 pm

HARTFORD — A major obstacle for sex offenders in Connecticut is a lack of housing, a new panel that embarked Wednesday on a two-year review of issues facing offenders and victims was told.

Eduardo Palmieri of the state Judicial Branch's court support services division said a "supportive living environment" is the best place for a sex offender re-entering society, but such a place can be hard to find.

"A lot of our offenders who have family have lost their support or have never had any familial support," said Palmieri, deputy director of adult probation. And if an offender becomes transient or homeless, the risk of that person committing more crimes increases, he told the special committee of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission.

Probation officers in Connecticut were overseeing 2,300 sex offenders as of July 31.

Lisa Tepper Bates, a committee member and executive director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, said some homeless shelters are housing a disproportionate number of sex offenders because of the difficulties registered sex offenders have in finding permanent housing.

The group agreed to form three subcommittees that will examine sex offender sentencing, management of sex offenders and the needs of the community and victims. The committee is to submit a final report in 2017 to the General Assembly, which passed legislation this year calling for the extensive review.

Besides housing, the state's sex offender registry is expected to be a major focus of the group's work. The website currently provides the public with information on more than 6,000 sex offenders living in the state who are required to register with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. But critics contend the site makes it difficult to determine which offenders are high-risk.

The committee is expected to find ways to make the registry more detailed and possibly implement a tiered system to help the public determine whether an offender is potentially a major threat.

Division executive director Stephen Grant, who co-chairs the committee, warned members their task will be labor intensive.