



TECH b.e.a.t

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Training for Tracking

Access to the Internet is so commonplace that limiting usage for parolees is equivalent to limiting telephone usage—almost impossible. In fact, courts seldom limit Internet access as a term of probation. However, a court can determine what type of materials an offender is forbidden to access. As a result, to be effective, parole and probation officers need the computer savvy—and the tools—to track the activities of an offender who may be much more technologically astute.

That effectiveness came to bear for George J. Stallworth, a probation and parole officer for the Sex Offender Unit of Tennessee's Board of Probation and Parole, and Dan Newby, a parole and probation officer and fugitive investigator for Iowa's 4th Judicial Fugitive Investigation Unit. Both officers had completed a course titled "Managing Sex Offenders' Computer Use: A 2-Day Technical Training for Probation and Parole Officers."

The no-cost course, offered at 10 sites per year through the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC)—Rocky Mountain in Denver, Colorado, provides a comprehensive set of skills and tools for parole and probation officers to manage and monitor offenders' behavior on the Internet, identify parole violations, and prevent the commission of future crimes. NLECTC—Rocky Mountain is a program of the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice. The course also is offered approximately once a year in Colorado through the American Probation and Parole Association.

The success of this course program is being seen in the field, says Jim Tanner, one of the course instructors at NLECTC—Rocky Mountain. Tanner says he has been receiving reports from his graduates who are getting convictions resulting from their new skills. Two of those success stories come from Stallworth and Newby.

Stallworth participated in the course several years ago. As part of the course materials, he received a disc with software that enables an officer to search the hard drive of an offender's computer.

"Following the training, I used this disk and searched an offender on my caseload and found images of child porn," Stallworth says. The district attorney and the sex crimes unit of the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department were called in, and the offender's drives were seized and searched. More than 60,000 images of child pornography were found in the drives and software belonging to this offender. Many of the images appeared to have been taken by the offender in his residence.

In a note of appreciation to NLECTC—Rocky Mountain, Stallworth says: "The offender has finally been adjudicated on these new charges and received a 5-year Federal sentence in conjunction with the State time he was already facing. I felt it necessary to inform you of the fruits of your work and efforts. Thank you, so much. Since your training and the arrest of this offender, I have been favorably called upon statewide to provide training in the supervision of sex offenders. The children of Tennessee and many other states are safer as a result of your diligence."

Because technology is always evolving, NLECTC—Rocky Mountain regularly updates course materials to stay current. The course has always provided software for the officers to use in their cases, but center staff recently developed freeware specifically for parole and probation officers to use when investigating an offender's computer. The program, called Field Search, has been part of the training since September 2005 and is proving very effective.

Stallworth says he replaced his older program with the Field Search software and has had tremendous success. "I love Field Search. I have used it for seven or eight searches and all of them have turned up probation violations. In addition, the reports are absolutely wonderful. I can use them in court, I can e-mail them, or I can keep them in my files to provide a full printout of exactly what has been done on a specific offender's computer."

Newby reported that he had immediate success using the new Field Search software.

