

**Defendant didn't complete treatment program**

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GREENVILLE, Ky. (AP) - A Greenville man accused of raping and killing a cheerleader spent more than three years in prison for previous sex crimes but only completed the first weeks of a treatment program, an official said.

Robert Keith Woodall, 22, was arrested Tuesday night and charged with murder, rape and kidnapping in the death Saturday of Sarah Hansen, 16, also of Greenville. He pleaded innocent Wednesday.

State prison officials say that most inmates imprisoned for sex crimes don't complete the voluntary sex-offender treatment program, which a new study suggests can be successful.

Woodall's case also highlights the limits of the state's registry that is supposed to track sex offenders upon their release from prison. Woodall was not listed in the registry, which is available only to law enforcement personnel, because his conviction predated the start of the registry in July 1994.

Hansen, a popular honor student, had gone to a convenience store near her house Saturday night to rent a video and never came home. Her partially clothed body was found in a nearby lake a few hours later.

On Thursday, Woodall's father, Robert Sr., told WFIE-TV in Evansville, Ind., that he is having a hard time coming to grips with the charges against his son. He also offered his condolences from his family to the Hansen family.

"Everyone of us ... feels extreme sympathy for the Hansen family because it's a terrible crime that's what's happened to their daughter."

The younger Woodall got out of prison last February after serving 3 1/2 years of a five-year sentence for two counts of first-degree sexual

abuse. His sentence was shortened because of time he was credited for good behavior in prison.

He had pleaded guilty in 1993 to sexually abusing a 9-year-old girl on two occasions in July 1992, when he was 18. A state corrections official said Woodall forced the girl to fondle him.

Woodall was indicted on three other counts of sexual abuse against three other young girls, but those charges were dismissed because of "the quality of the evidence," said Muhlenberg Commonwealth's Attorney David Jernigan.

While in prison, Woodall completed only eight weeks of a two-year sex-offender-treatment program, according to Kathi Peterson, who heads the Corrections Department program.

Woodall was denied parole in March 1994 because he dropped out of the program the previous fall. A 1986 state law prohibits parole for sex offenders who don't finish treatment.

Parole Board Chairman Helen Howard-Hughes said Woodall also had been written up several times for fighting in prison and appeared to have adjusted poorly to life behind bars in his first year.

Criminologists say sex offenders are more likely than almost any other criminals to repeat their offenses, but treatment can reduce repeat offenses.

Peterson said a study to be published shortly will show that between 1990 and 1995, sex offenders who didn't complete Kentucky's treatment program before being released from prison were arrested three times as often for new sex crimes as inmates who had completed treatment in prison. Nine percent of the untreated offenders were arrested on new sex charges during that time, compared with 3 percent of those treated.

Experts say the repeat-offense rate is actually much higher, but offenders are often not caught or the victims don't press charges.

The Courier-Journal reported in 1994 that just 9 percent of sex offenders released from prison between 1987 and 1994 had completed treatment. Peterson disputed the newspaper's analysis but said she did not have any data on the percentage of sex offenders who complete the program in prison. And she acknowledged that the large majority of inmates don't complete treatment.

Currently, Peterson said, 350 of Kentucky's 2,000 imprisoned sexual offenders, or 17.5 percent, are enrolled. Peterson said inmates like Woodall who are serving five or fewer years are much less likely to participate in treatment than those serving longer sentences. That's because they have little incentive to complete treatment, she said.

Inmates become eligible to enroll in the two-year treatment program

three years before they are eligible to face the parole board. But with credit earned for good behavior, a five-year sentence typically becomes 3 1/2 years, even without parole.

"I don't know what the solution would be other than to have longer sentences," Peterson said.

If short-term sex offenders have little incentive to enroll and complete the treatment, then the state should motivate them, possibly by taking away good time, said state Rep. Charles Geveden, D-Wickliffe.

Experts say that sex offenders can't be forced to enroll in treatment, because inmates must want treatment and admit their problem for the program to help them.

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