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Correction: Wed., July 13, 2011

*In June 25 editions, a story on page A1 about career criminal Michael Constantine characterized both of his parents as abusive. Ramsey County Attorney **John Choi** said that Constantine's father abused him and his mother. Constantine's mother was not implicated in the abuse.*

Some crooks get 3 strikes, others get many more Not now, says Ramsey County in crackdown on career criminals

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Michael James Constantine is a poster boy for career criminals.

Beginning in 1986, he has been arrested at least 40 times and racked up 14 misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor convictions and 19 felony convictions, the Ramsey County attorney said.

"Now he's in jail for a really long time, and without question, he deserves it," said County Attorney **John Choi**.

Prosecutors took advantage of state laws on career criminals to send Constantine to prison for 20 years, and they plan to do that more often.

Flanked by law enforcement, **Choi** on Friday announced an initiative dubbed DROP, for **Dangerous and Repeat Offenders** Program.

It uses a state law that provides for increased prison time for certain **offenders** so that they serve significantly longer periods of time than they would otherwise.

So-called "**dangerous offenders**" must have two or more prior convictions for violent crime and be a danger to public safety.

Those qualifying as "**repeat offenders**" must have at least five prior felony convictions on separate dates, and the current offense must be part of a "pattern of criminal conduct."

Choi made his announcement in the community room of the Crosby Pointe apartments in St. Paul, where Constantine had stolen a flat-screen TV. He was caught on security cameras as he carried it out.

Resident Peter Bradley said that was one of several thefts in the building, where neighbors enjoy a close-knit community. "That sense of community was significantly rattled after not one but several burglaries, some of them in this very room," he said.

For the news conference, **Choi's** staff tacked up 29 enlarged mug shots of Constantine taken over the years. Now 44, Constantine ran away from abusive parents when he was 13, **Choi** said. He got in trouble as a juvenile, became chemically dependent, moved in and out of prison and tried to straighten himself out, **Choi** said.

That's a reminder that society must "demand better of our parents, do better by our kids" and provide more effective programs for those coming out of prison.

But public safety cannot suffer while rehabilitation is failing or the defendant rejects it, he said. "They've made the choice not to take that help on numerous occasions."

St. Paul Police Chief Thomas Smith said he fully supported the new program.

Seeing the same people commit crimes over and over is something that "has stuck in my craw throughout my career," Smith said.

Veteran prosecutor Susan Hudson will lead the effort, **Choi** said.

REPEAT CRIMINALS

- Over a four-year period, 5 percent of **offenders** were responsible for 19 percent of the criminal convictions in Minnesota, including 37 percent of the felonies.

- About 62 percent of chronic **offenders** had convictions in more than one county.

- More than three-fourths of the chronic **offenders** were convicted of more than one type of crime.

Source: Legislative Auditor's report, 2001

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Photo: RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Twenty-nine mugs shots illustrating Michael James Constantine's 25-year criminal career are displayed Friday during a news conference at Crosby Pointe Apartments, where Ramsey County Attorney **John Choi** announced an initiative to target **repeat offenders** such as Constantine.