

Sex Offender Registration and Community Notification Information for Sexual Assault Victim Advocates

What sexual assault advocates and programs need to know about sex offender registration and community notification.

Introduction

- This webinar will assist advocates in understanding the complexities of sex offender registration and community notification as it relates to victims of sexual assault. Advocates may need to answer questions from victims and their support people regarding sex offender risk levels, registration requirements, community notification, residency restrictions, personal safety and sexual assault prevention.

Community Protection Act of 1990

- Became effective February 28, 1990
- Washington State was the first state to enact a community notification law
- Offender registration
- Community notification - one element of the omnibus bill which significantly changed how sex offenders are monitored in the state
- Civil commitment of Sexually Violent Predators
- Office of Crime Victims Advocacy

Who has to Register?

- Juvenile and adult convicted sex offenders
- Convicted of a registerable sex offense on or after 2/28/90
- Convicted of a certain kidnapping offenses on or after July 1997
- Out of state sex offenders who are required to register in state of conviction
- All felony sex offenses and some gross misdemeanors
- Must register within 3 days of release or moving to a new location
- Currently there are 18,000 active registered sex offenders in Washington State
- Less than 20% of registered sex offenders are under State supervision
- Registered sex offender information is available through the Sheriff's website and the state website at www.sheriffalerts.com

Prior to Release

- All registerable sex offender cases are reviewed by the End of Sentence Review Committee to determine a risk level.
- Since 1997, the Committee has been responsible for establishing the sex offender level of notification. Law enforcement may depart from the Committee's Risk Level Assessment; however, they are required by law to notify the End of Sentence Review Committee of the departure and the reasons.

What do the levels mean?

- Level I: The majority of registered sex offenders, about 70%, are classified as Level I. They are considered low risk to re-offend within the community at large. These persons may be first time offenders and generally have an established relationship with their victim.
- Level II: Moderate risk of re-offend within the community at large, about 20%. They generally have more than one victim. These offenders usually groom their victims. They may use a position of trust to commit their crimes.
- Level III: Considered to have a high risk to re-offend in the community at large. They usually have more than one victim and have committed prior sex crimes or crimes of violence. They generally do not know their victim(s) or have a history of grooming victims for the purpose of victimization.

Who is Notified?

- Law enforcement is responsible for community notification.
- The extent of notification is determined by the offender's risk level.
 - Level I: Internal law enforcement notification; school principals and district superintendents; individual community members upon request.
 - Level II: May disclose relevant, necessary, and accurate information to schools, child and family care centers, businesses and organizations that serve children, women or vulnerable adults, and individuals and groups near where the offender is regularly found.
 - Level III: In addition to Level II information, the agency may also provide information to the public at large.

How does notification occur?

- E-mail or other written notification to law enforcement and school personnel for all level offenders.
- Legal notices must be published in local newspapers for Level III offenders.
- Information on Level II and Level III sex offenders is also published on the internet. To access, use the link on the county sheriff's website or go to www.sheriffalerts.com
- The public may register for e-mail alerts on Level II and III offenders.

How many?

- Number of active offenders registered within the state of Washington – 18,000.
- Number of active Level I offenders – 13,000 70%
- Active Level II offenders - 3,200 18%
- Active Level III offenders – 1,500 8%

Juvenile Sex Offenders?

- Those under the age of 18, not tried as an adult. About 500 on the registry, 80% are Level I. We do not yet have a way to identify the number of offenders who are now adults that were convicted as juveniles.
- There is new and on-going research focusing on the differences between adult and juvenile offenders.
- Registration and community notification laws in this state do not differentiate between adult and juvenile offenders.
- Juvenile sex offenders may petition the court to be relieved of the duty to register much sooner than adult offenders.

Why the community needs to know

- Most will be released into the community.
- Most are not under correctional supervision.
- Most can be safely monitored in the community.
- Communities can help sex offenders stabilize, thereby reducing recidivism.

Community Questions?

- Can you make them leave?
- How close to schools or child care centers or parks can they live?
- How long do they have to register?
- How can I protect my family and myself?
- I found a great apartment, but it's next to a sex offender. Is it safe to live there?

Registered Sex Offender Monitoring

- It is a state law to verify an offender's address.
 - Level I sex offender – once a year
 - Level II sex offender – twice a year
 - Level III sex offender – quarterly
 - Homeless offender – checks in weekly

Offender Stability is Important to Community Safety

- Compliance with registration obligations +
- Compliance with conditions of supervision +
- Ongoing treatment as needed and/or required +
- Stable place to live and work+
- Support network =

A reduction in the risk that the offender will re-offend.

Offender Specific Information

- Offender Watch – the Megan’s Law public website through the county sheriff’s website or www.sheriffalerts.com
- National Sex Offender Public Website - www.nsopw
Can search this site by name or go any state by clicking on Public Registry Sites.
- Other sites – like Family Watchdog not recommended. Information is not up-to-date and there may be a cost.

What is the Adam Walsh Act?

- Federal legislation to better link states when tracking registered sex offenders.
- Most states are not compliant with this federal law, including Washington.
- Tribes are moving toward compliance as part of their federal mandate.
- Provides funding and resources to the US Marshal Service to charge offenders who cross state lines and do not register.

SA Agency Role

- Community focus
- Community sexual assault resource center
- Public awareness information
- Personal safety education
- Talking to children about personal safety
- Offender Watch availability

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