

# **Wisconsin Department of Corrections Sex Offender Registry**

In 1997, the State of Wisconsin enacted the Sex Offender Registration and Community Notification Law. This law was created to monitor and track people convicted of sex crimes and to provide access to this information for police, victims and the general public.

This Web site is designed to enhance public safety by making the information contained in the Sex Offender Registry easily accessible to the public. It will also serve to enhance public awareness about sexual violence in our communities and provide valuable information about the ways in which individuals and communities can protect themselves and those they love from acts of sexual violence. The hope is that this Web site may also, in some meaningful way, reduce future victimization and the suffering that accompanies it.

## **Wisconsin Sex Offender Database Overview and Search Services**

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections manages the Sex Offender Registry Program and maintains a database of registrant information for this purpose. Information from this database is being made available on this Web site to support public safety.

You can obtain information about registered sex offenders by submitting name or location searches, at this site: <http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/home.jsp>.

If you search by name, you will receive information about all registered sex offenders, including those who are presently incarcerated as well as those who are not incarcerated. If you search by location, you will receive information only about offenders who are presently residing in communities in Wisconsin or elsewhere.

Registrants are required to keep the Department of Corrections informed about their residence address and any residence changes.

## **Sex Offender Registry Program Background**

Wisconsin's Sex Offender Registry is maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Sex Offender Registration Program, commonly referred to as SORP. On June 1, 1997, Wisconsin Act 440, the Sex Offender Registration and Community Notification law, became effective, allowing for the collecting and dissemination of information related to certain sex offenders.

All information included in the Registry is available to law enforcement agencies. Victims, neighborhood watch groups and the general public also have access. However, access for each of these groups is limited to certain types of information.

Public notification has been in place as a national law for several years. In 1994, the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act was enacted. The Jacob Wetterling Act required all states to establish stringent registration programs for sex offenders by September 1997, including the identification and lifetime registration of "sexual predators." The Jacob Wetterling Act is a National law that is designed to protect children and was named after Jacob Wetterling, an eleven year old boy who was kidnapped in October 1989. Jacob is still missing. Megan's Law, the first amendment to the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offenders Act, was passed in October 1996. Megan's Law mandated all states to develop notification protocol that would allow public access to information about sex offenders in the community. Megan's Law was named after Megan Kanka, a seven-year-old girl who was sexually assaulted and murdered by a twice-convicted child molester in her New Jersey neighborhood.

Sex offenders pose an ongoing risk of engaging in sex offenses even after being released from incarceration or commitment. Protection of the public from sex offenders is a paramount governmental interest. Persons found to have committed a sex offense have a reduced expectation of privacy because of the public's interest in public safety. Registration, while on supervision and following the expiration from sentence, serves as a means for monitoring and tracking the whereabouts of sex offenders in the community.

Community Notification, or the release of relevant offender information about sex offenders to law enforcement, public/private entities and the general public, will further the governmental interests of public safety and enhance strategies for crime detection and prevention.

Wisconsin Statute 301.45 required the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to create a Sex Offender Registry Program for individuals adjudicated, convicted, and/or committed under included offenses, or comparable offenses in other state and federal jurisdictions. Under Wisconsin Statute 301.45, a registrant must report his/her **Residence, Employment, and School Enrollment**, while under supervision and for 15 years from discharge, **or** for life, whichever applies. The registrant must report any changes of **Residence, Employment, and School Enrollment** within 10 days of the effective change. Registrants are also required to complete an annual verification form. In addition, registrants are subject to periodic, random verification checks conducted by the Wisconsin Sex Offender Registry Program.

### **Who is required to register?**

**Mandatory Registration:** All offenders who are convicted of any included offense (Wis. 301.45) or whose compliance is mandated by the court, shall be required to register with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. This includes juveniles, probationers, parolees, adult offenders entering Wisconsin supervision from another state, adult offenders leaving Wisconsin supervision to another state, and persons entering this state under a federal, tribal or military conviction for a sexual offense.

People who are convicted of, adjudicated or committed for a violation, solicitation, conspiracy or attempt to commit a violation of any registerable offense on or after 12/25/1993 must register. Registration is also required for people who have been in prison, on probation or parole or in a mental or county correctional institution since 12/25/93 for a registerable offense.

Additionally, the following sex offenders are required to register in Wisconsin if they live, work or attend school in Wisconsin:

1. any sex offender who is required to register with another state/jurisdiction
2. any sex offender convicted in a military, tribal, or federal court
3. any sex offender who has been convicted in another state of an offense comparable to one of Wisconsin's registerable offenses
4. any juvenile who is on supervision and enters Wisconsin under the Interstate Compact Agreement

## **PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION**

Community Notification occurs through a variety of means and at several levels. Provisions within the law require DOC to maintain a database of registered sex offenders. Information stored in the database is accessible on a limited basis by victims, neighborhood watch programs and the general public. All information available in the database is accessible by law enforcement via the CIB/TIME system, law enforcement web site, and through direct request to the DOC Sex Offender Registry Program. Additionally, DOC provides special notification to law enforcement about offenders that meet the criteria who are scheduled to be released from prison or a mental health institution. This notification is called Special Bulletin Notification.

## **SPECIAL BULLETIN NOTIFICATION**

Special Bulletin Notification (SBN) is an active, written notification process whereby law enforcement officials, in the county and areas of the offender's residence, employment or school enrollment, will receive detailed information from the DOC SORP on a specific offender prior to his/her scheduled release from confinement.

Wisconsin law does not require special bulletin notifications for all offenders released from prison or a mental health facility. The overall purpose of the SBN is to highlight those cases that may pose a significant risk to the community. The SBN provides advanced notification to law enforcement officials, as well as information regarding the offender's offense pattern and specialized rules of supervision. In addition, the Bulletin serves as a mechanism to begin a local decision-making process to determine the level, scope and method of community notification, if determined necessary.

## **WHAT CASES REQUIRE OR WARRANT A SPECIAL BULLETIN?**

The law mandates that an SBN shall be provided to law enforcement under the following cases:

1. All individuals committed under Chapter 980 (Sexually Violent Persons Law) who are to be placed into the community under supervised release or discharged from the commitment and
2. All cases where the offender has been convicted of a sex offense, as defined by crimes requiring registration, on two (2) or more separate occasions (2-Strike Cases). A previous conviction can include a conviction from another state that is comparable to one of the crimes requiring registration. Offenses/Dispositions that do NOT constitute a strike include:
  - o Juvenile adjudications
  - o Read-ins
  - o Convictions that have been reversed, set aside, or vacated

The law does provide discretion to the Department of Corrections and Health Services in determining if an SBN is warranted for those cases not requiring mandatory bulletins.

## **LEVELS OF NOTIFICATION**

Upon receipt of the SBN, law enforcement agencies in the jurisdiction(s) where the offender is to be released are responsible for determining, on a case-by-case basis, what level of community notification is to occur. The three levels of notification are as follows:

- LEVEL 1: Limited to Law Enforcement
- LEVEL 2: Targeted Notification - Including specific groups/facilities serving populations related to the offender's identified pattern of behavior. Such groups may include schools, neighbors, community groups, day care centers, parks, recreation areas, libraries etc.
- LEVEL 3: Expanded Notification - Notification to the public in general. A variety of methods may be used including door-to-door notification, media releases, and/or community meetings.

The ultimate decision for determining what level of notification will occur is the responsibility of law enforcement. However, other agencies/groups, including DOC, may be involved in the decision-making process. In many communities law enforcement agencies utilize a Community Notification Core Team to assist in decision-making process.

## COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION CORE TEAMS

The purpose of the Community Notification Core Team is summarized as follows:

- To review and discuss case information relative to the specific sex offender who is the subject of the SBN
- To provide recommendations to assist law enforcement in decision making relative to the level, scope and methods for notification specific to the offender and the community.

The law does not require the formation of the Core Team. When law enforcement agencies choose to utilize a team, it is the responsibility of law enforcement agencies within each county or jurisdiction to develop this team. However, DOC staff and others will assist in this process if requested.

The composition of these teams may vary from county to county across the state. However, it is recommended that, at a minimum, the team include representatives from the Sheriff's departments and police departments within the county, as well as representatives from local or regional DOC Community Corrections, including the supervising agent, field supervisor, and sex offender registration specialist.

Other team members may include representatives from the district attorney's office, crime victim/witness unit, school district, county human services, neighborhood watch captain, etc.

Decisions relative to community notification and release of information about SBN offenders are the responsibility of law enforcement agencies. DOC may assist in this process but may not participate in notification beyond the level determined by law enforcement agencies.

However, as part of the case management process, Community Corrections staff may share information about the offender with the offender's significant other, landlords, neighbors, employers, etc., if it is determined that providing the information is in the best interest of public safety and/or the offender's rehabilitation.

### Removal from Registry

There are three methods for removing an individual from the Registry, or making his/her records "inactive":

1. **Period of Registration Completed** Registrants who have completed their required term of registration, 15 years following expiration from sentence, will have their records made "Inactive" on the Registry. These individuals will receive a "Notice of Termination" of their obligation to register.
2. **Record Expungement** Registrants may request expungement of all pertinent information in the Registry on the grounds that his/her conviction, delinquency,

adjudication or commitment has been reversed, set aside or vacated. The DOC must purge all information in the Registry concerning an individual when DOC receives the confirmation.

3. **Death** Death of a registrant will be verified by the Registration Specialist. Upon verification, these records will be made "Inactive" in the Registry.

**For More Information:**

WI Department of Corrections  
Sex Offender Registry Program (SORP)  
3099 E Washington Avenue

PO Box 7925  
Madison, WI 53707-7925  
877-234-0085 (toll free)

WI Department of Corrections  
Office of Victim Services and Programs  
3099 E Washington Avenue

PO Box 7925  
Madison, WI 53707-7925  
800-947-5777 (toll free)  
608-240-5888 (Madison area)  
WIVictimsVoice.org

Wisconsin Sex Offender Registry Information  
Toll Free Access Line 1-800-398-2403

SAFE Tip toll free hot line at 877-234-0085 or E-mail to [docsafetips@doc.state.wi.us](mailto:docsafetips@doc.state.wi.us).

**Sources:**

Valerie Santana, Sex Offender Registry Specialist  
3099 E. Washington Avenue Madison, WI 53707

[www.widocoffenders.org](http://www.widocoffenders.org)

<http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/home.jsp>

<http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/proginfo/sor.jsp>