

Sex Offender Registry Requirements Across the United States

What is the Sex Offender Registry?

Every state and U.S. territory requires those convicted of sex offenses to be added to a registry to be monitored and tracked after their release back into the community. Information about the offender is collected and shared with local and federal authorities, as well as the general public. Requirements and restrictions are often placed on registered sex offenders. That registration process is unique in each state and U.S. territory.

What is SORNA?

The Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) was passed in 2006 as part of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act to provide federal standards for jurisdictions to follow. SORNA calls for states and U.S. territories to meet minimum requirements for sex offender registration and notification.

Why Are the Requirements for Sex Offender Registration Different Everywhere?

While SORNA's guidelines streamlined registration and notification requirements across the country, these requirements are far from uniform. Each jurisdiction determines the details of their own registration process. This leaves a patchwork of rules for sex offenders that vary widely depending on where a registrant lives or works.

Where PIN Comes In

Probation Information Network developed a list of questions regarding the sex offender registration requirements across the country. These are questions that might concern the public, victims and their advocates, or those who are facing registration or are currently registered and their loved ones. We then searched the statutes or code of each jurisdiction for the laws surrounding sex offender registration and notification. Where necessary, we consulted with the law enforcement agency in charge of the jurisdiction's registry to provide clear and concise answers to the following questions:

- **What is the duration of registration?**

How long must a sex offender remain on the registry? The length of time a sex offender must comply with registration requirements varies widely depending on the jurisdiction where the registrant lives, and the level of the offense committed. All but 2 jurisdictions offer a path for eventual removal from the registry for at least some of their registrants.

- **Must the immediate community be notified directly, either by the offender or law enforcement?**

Every jurisdiction has passive community notification in the form of a public sex offender registry website. Concerned citizens are free to search the website and can sign up for email notifications if a sex offender moves into their neighborhood. Some jurisdictions go even further and require active notification, where either law enforcement or the offender themselves is required to directly

notify the immediate community that a sex offender is in the area. This can take many forms, including electronic, mail, or in-person notification, publication in local newspapers, and community meetings.

- **What are the residence distance restrictions?**

Are there any restrictions on where a registered sex offender can live? Some jurisdictions restrict registrants from living within a measured distance of certain places. This restriction could be for all registrants, or only for higher-level offenders or those under supervision. Some jurisdictions do not have a state-wide restriction but do allow local jurisdictions to enact their own.

- **What are the employment distance restrictions?**

Registered sex offenders are usually restricted from certain types of employment, and from working at establishments that specifically cater to minors. Some jurisdictions go even further and restrict registrants from working within a measured distance of certain places.

- **Is an employer's information included on the public registry?**

Returning citizens of every type need to find employment upon reentry, and sex offenders are no exception. Some jurisdictions include registrants' employment information on the public registry website. This could be the employer's address or in some cases the name of the employer.

- **Are online identifiers included on the public registry?**

Some jurisdictions require registered sex offenders to report any identifiers they use online, such as email addresses and social media user names. In some jurisdictions that information is included on the public registry website, separate from the registrant's profile, in a feature that allows the public to search by specific identifiers.

- **Is a state-issued ID required to be labeled?**

Some jurisdictions require a state-issued ID, such as a driver's license, to be labeled to identify the holder as a registered sex offender. This label could be the words "Sex Offender" printed on the ID in a prominent place or a more subtle designation known to law enforcement.

- **What is the cost of registration?**

Is there a fee to register as a sex offender? Some jurisdictions pass on some of their administrative costs to the registrants. This could be a one-time fee paid only upon initial registration, or an ongoing fee paid annually or quarterly. Some jurisdictions charge a fee every time a registrant updates their information.

- **How long can a registrant be in the state for work or education before registration is required?**

Does a sex offender have to register if they work or go to school in a different state? It depends on the state, and how long the registrant will be there. Some jurisdictions require registrants to notify authorities immediately, while others allow limited stays without requiring registration. Registrants currently under supervision usually need permission from their Parole or Probation Officer before traveling and should always consult their supervising officer.

- **How long can a registrant visit the state before registration is required?**

Can a registered sex offender go on vacation? Does a sex offender have to register if they visit a different state? It depends on the state, and how long the registrant will be there. Some jurisdictions require registrants to notify authorities immediately, while others allow limited stays without requiring registration. Registrants currently under supervision usually need permission from their Parole or Probation Officer before traveling and should always consult their supervising officer.

The answers provided are taken directly from the laws found on the state or territory's legislative website or, where necessary, from the website of the law enforcement agency in charge of the jurisdiction's registry. In some cases, we contacted state or territory officials for clarification and have directly quoted those conversations.

Disclaimer

While we stand by our research, it is for informational purposes only. It should not be considered legal advice and, while we strive to provide accurate and up to date information, it is not guaranteed to be complete or correct. We provide links to each jurisdiction's legislative and law enforcement websites and maintain a directory of lawyers who specialize in sex offender registration laws. For those currently under supervision, consult with your Parole or Probation Officer for guidance.

Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Requirements

What is the duration of registration?

MGL c.6 § 178G

The duty of a sex offender required to register pursuant to this chapter and to comply with the requirements hereof shall, unless sooner terminated by the board under section 178L, end 20 years after such sex offender has been convicted or adjudicated or has been released from all custody or supervision, whichever last occurs, unless such sex offender was convicted of two or more sex offenses defined as sex offenses pursuant to the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act, 42 U.S.C. section 14071, committed on different occasions, has been convicted of a sexually violent offense; has been determined by the sentencing court to be a sexually violent predator, or if such sex offender is otherwise subject to lifetime registration requirements as determined by the board pursuant to section 178D, in which cases the duty to register shall never be terminated. A person required to register with the sex offender registry board may make an application to said board to terminate the obligation upon proof, by clear and convincing evidence, that the person has not committed a sex offense within ten years following conviction, adjudication or release from all custody or supervision, whichever is later, and is not likely to pose a danger to the safety of others. For so long as such sex offender is under a duty to register in the commonwealth or in any other state where the offender resides or would be under such a duty if residing in the commonwealth, such sex offender shall not be entitled to relief under the provisions of section 100A or 100B of chapter 276.

Must the immediate community be notified directly, either by the offender or law enforcement?

MGL c.6 § 178K

(2) (c) Where the board determines that the risk of reoffense is high and the degree of dangerousness posed to the public is such that a substantial public safety interest is served by active dissemination, it shall give a level 3 designation to the sex offender. In such case, the board shall transmit the registration data and designation to the police departments in the municipalities where the sex offender lives, has a secondary address and works and attends an institution of higher learning or, if in custody, intends to live and work and attend an institution of higher learning upon release and where the offense was committed and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A level 3 community notification plan shall require the police department to notify organizations in the community which are likely to encounter such sex offender and individual members of the public who are likely to encounter such sex offender. The sex offender shall be required to register and to verify registration information pursuant to sections 178F1/2. Neighboring police districts shall share sex offender registration information of level 3 offenders and may inform the residents of their municipality of a sex offender they are likely to encounter who resides in an adjacent city or town. The police or the board shall actively disseminate in such time and manner as such police department or board deems reasonably necessary the following information:

- (i) the name of the sex offender;
- (ii) the offender's home address and any secondary address;
- (iii) the offender's work address;

- (iv) the offense for which the offender was convicted or adjudicated and the date of the conviction or adjudication;
- (v) the sex offender's age, sex, race, height, weight, eye and hair color; and
- (vi) a photograph of the sex offender, if available; provided, that such active dissemination may include publication of such information on the internet by the police department at such time and in such manner as the police or the board deem reasonably necessary; and provided further, that the police or the board shall not release information identifying the victim by name, address or relation to the sex offender. All notices to the community shall include a warning regarding the criminal penalties for use of sex offender registry information to commit a crime or to engage in illegal discrimination or harassment of an offender and the punishment for threatening to commit a crime under section 4 of chapter 275.
- (vii) the name and address of the institution of higher learning that the sex offender is attending.

What are the residence distance restrictions?

None.

What are the employment distance restrictions?

None.

Is an employer's information included on the public registry?

Yes, for Levels 2 and 3.

MGL c.6 § 178D

Notwithstanding sections 178C to 178P, inclusive, or any other general or special law to the contrary and in addition to any responsibility otherwise imposed upon the board, the board shall make the sex offender information contained in the sex offender registry, delineated below in subsections (i) to (viii), inclusive, available for inspection by the general public in the form of a comprehensive database published on the internet, known as the "sex offender internet database"; provided, however, that no registration data relating to a sex offender given a level 1 designation by the board under section 178K shall be published in the sex offender internet database but may be disseminated by the board as otherwise permitted by said sections 178C to 178P, inclusive; and provided further, that the board shall keep confidential and shall not publish in the sex offender internet database any information relating to requests for registration data under sections 178I and 178J:

- (iii) the offender's work address;

Are online identifiers included on the public registry?

No.

Is a state-issued ID required to be labeled?

No.

What is the cost of registration?

MGL c.6 § 178Q

The sex offender registry board shall assess upon every sex offender a sex offender registration fee of \$75, hereinafter referred to as a sex offender registry fee. Said offender shall pay said sex offender registry fee upon his initial registration as a sex offender and annually thereafter on the anniversary of said registration; provided, however, that no such fee shall be assessed or collected until the offender has either (1) waived his right to petition for an evidentiary hearing to challenge his duty to register as a sex offender as set forth in section 178L or (2) has completely exhausted the legal remedies made available to him to so challenge said duty to register pursuant to sections 178L and 178M and has not prevailed in his attempt to eliminate said duty. A sex offender's duty to pay the fee established by this section shall only terminate upon the termination of said offender's duty to register as a sex offender as set forth in section 178G.

The sex offender registry board may waive payment of said sex offender registry fee if it determines that such payment would constitute an undue hardship on said person or his family due to limited income, employment status, or any other relevant factor. Any such waiver so granted shall be in effect only during the period of time that said person is determined to be unable to pay the sex offender registry fee. The sex offender registry board shall establish procedures relative to the collection and waiver of such fee by regulation. Said sex offender registry fee shall be collected and retained by the sex offender registry board. The sex offender registry board shall account for all such fees received and report said fees annually to the secretary of administration and finance and the house and senate committees on ways and means.

How long can a registrant be in the state for work or education before registration is required?

If you are a sex offender living in another state but working in Massachusetts, you must:

- Register as a sex offender in Massachusetts within 2 days of starting your job.
- Register your work address within 10 days of starting your job.

If you are a sex offender living in another state but going to school in Massachusetts, you must:

- Register as a sex offender in Massachusetts within 10 days of starting school.

– Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board

MGL c.6 § 178E

(g) A sex offender who moves into the commonwealth from another jurisdiction shall, within two days of moving into the commonwealth, register by mailing to the board on a form approved by the board and signed under the pains and penalties of perjury, the sex offender's name, date of birth, home address or intended home address, any secondary addresses or intended secondary addresses, work address or intended work address and, if the sex offender is or intends to become a part-time or full-time employee of an institution of higher learning, the name and address of the institution, and, if the sex offender is or intends to become a part-time or full-time student of an institution of higher learning, the name and address of the institution. The board shall transmit the registration data to the police department in the municipality where such sex offender intends to live and work and, if the sex offender intends to work at or become a student at an institution of higher learning, to the police departments in the municipalities where the sex offender will work or attend such institution and shall transmit the same to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

(o) A sex offender who plans to work at or attend an institution of higher learning part-time or full-time in the commonwealth shall, within 10 days prior to commencing employment or enrollment in classes at an institution of higher learning, register by mailing to the board on a form approved by the board and signed under the pains and penalties of perjury, the sex offender's name, date of birth, home address or intended home address, any secondary addresses or intended secondary addresses, work address or intended work address, and the name and address of the institution of higher learning. The board shall transmit notice of such change of address to all police departments in the municipalities where the sex offender plans to work at or attend an institution of higher learning and shall transmit the same to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

How long can a registrant visit the state before registration is required?

MGL c.6 § 178E

(g) A sex offender who moves into the commonwealth from another jurisdiction shall, within two days of moving into the commonwealth, register by mailing to the board on a form approved by the board and signed under the pains and penalties of perjury, the sex offender's name, date of birth, home address or intended home address, any secondary addresses or intended secondary addresses, work address or intended work address and, if the sex offender is or intends to become a part-time or full-time employee of an institution of higher learning, the name and address of the institution, and, if the sex offender is or intends to become a part-time or full-time student of an institution of higher learning, the name and address of the institution. The board shall transmit the registration data to the police department in the

municipality where such sex offender intends to live and work and, if the sex offender intends to work at or become a student at an institution of higher learning, to the police departments in the municipalities where the sex offender will work or attend such institution and shall transmit the same to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.