

# 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.

# **South Carolina Sex Offender Registry Requirements**

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

SC Code § 23-3-460

(A) A person required to register pursuant to this article is required to register biannually for life. For purposes of this article, "biannually" means each year during the month of his birthday and again during the sixth month following his birth month. The person required to register shall register and must reregister at the sheriff's department in each county where he resides, owns real property, is employed, or attends any public or private school, including, but not limited to, a secondary school, adult education school, college or university, and any vocational, technical, or occupational school. A person determined by a court to be a sexually violent predator pursuant to state law is required to verify registration and be photographed every ninety days by the sheriff's department in the county in which he resides unless the person is committed to the custody of the State, and verification will be held in abeyance until his release.

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

SC Code § 23-3-535

(F)(1) At the beginning of each school year, each school district must provide:

- (a) the names and addresses of every sex offender who resides within one thousand feet of a school bus stop within the school district to the parents or guardians of a student who boards or disembarks a school bus at a stop covered by this subsection; or
- (b) the hyperlink to the sex offender registry web site on the school district's web site for the purpose of gathering this information.

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

SC Code § 23-3-535

(A) As contained in this section:

- (4) "Within one thousand feet" means a measurement made in a straight line, without regard to intervening structures or objects, from the nearest portion of the property on which the sex offender resides to the nearest property line of the premises of a school, daycare center, children's recreational facility, park, or public playground, whichever is closer.

(B) It is unlawful for a sex offender who has been convicted of any of the following offenses to reside within one thousand feet of a school, daycare center, children's recreational facility, park, or public playground:

- (1) criminal sexual conduct with a minor, first degree;
- (2) criminal sexual conduct with a minor, second degree;
- (3) assault with intent to commit criminal sexual conduct with a minor;

- (4) kidnapping a person under eighteen years of age; or
- (5) trafficking in persons of a person under eighteen years of age except when the court makes a finding on the record that the offense did not include a criminal sexual offense or an attempted criminal sexual offense.

(C) This section does not apply to a sex offender who:

- (1) resided within one thousand feet of a school, daycare center, children's recreational facility, park, or public playground before the effective date of this act;
- (2) resided within one thousand feet of a school, daycare center, children's recreational facility, park, or public playground on property the sex offender owned before the sex offender was charged with any of the offenses enumerated in subsection (B);
- (3) resides within one thousand feet of a school, daycare center, children's recreational facility, park, or public playground as a result of the establishment of a new school, daycare center, children's recreational facility, park, or public playground;

**What are the employment distance restrictions?**

None.

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

Yes.

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

While offenders must register online identifiers [SC Code § 23-3-555 (B)(1)], this information is not included on the public registry.

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

No.

**What is the cost of registration?**

Part 1B Section 62 – D100 – State Law Enforcement Division 2021-2022 Appropriation Act 62.10. Each Sheriff is authorized to charge and collect an annual amount of one hundred fifty dollars from each sex offender required to register by law. If such sex offender has been declared indigent by the Sheriff of the county in which the offender must register and provides proof of the declaration at the time of registration, the fee will automatically be waived. If an offender is not declared indigent and fails to pay the fee, he is officially declared unregistered.

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

SC Code § 23-3-460

(D) If a person required to register pursuant to this article changes his permanent or temporary address into another county in South Carolina, the person must register with the county sheriff in the new county within three business days of establishing the new residence. The person also must provide written notice within three business days of the change of address in the previous county to the sheriff with whom the person last registered. For purposes of this subsection, "temporary address" or "residence" means the location of the individual's home or other place where the person habitually lives or resides, or where the person lives or resides for a period of ten or more consecutive days. For purposes of this subsection, "habitually lives or resides" means locations at which the person lives with some regularity.

(G) A person required to register pursuant to this article who moves to South Carolina from another state establishes residence, acquires real property, is employed in, or attends, is enrolled, volunteers, interns, is employed by, or carries on a vocation at a public or private school, including, but not limited to, a kindergarten, elementary school, middle school or junior high, high school, secondary school, adult education school, college or university, and a vocational, technical, or occupational school in South Carolina, and is not under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections, the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, or the Juvenile Parole Board at the time

of moving to South Carolina must register within three business days of establishing residence, acquiring real property, gaining employment, attending or enrolling, volunteering or interning, being employed by, or carrying on a vocation at a public or private school in this State.

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