

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.

Tennessee Sex Offender Registry Requirements

What is the duration of registration?

TN Code § 40-39-207

(a) (1) Except as otherwise provided in subdivision (a)(3), unless a plea was taken in conjunction with § 40-35-313, no sooner than ten (10) years after termination of active supervision on probation, parole, or any other alternative to incarceration, or no sooner than ten (10) years after discharge from incarceration without supervision, an offender required to register under this part may file a request for termination of registration requirements with TBI headquarters in Nashville. If the person is required to register under this part due to a plea taken in conjunction with § 40-35-313, an offender required to register under this part may file a request for termination of registration upon successful completion of a term of judicial diversion pursuant to § 40-35-313 and upon receiving an order from a court of competent jurisdiction signifying the successful completion of the term of judicial diversion and the dismissal of charges pursuant to § 40-35-313.

(g) (2) An offender required to register under this part shall continue to comply with the registration, verification and tracking requirements for the life of that offender, if that offender:

- (A) Has one (1) or more prior convictions for a sexual offense, as defined in § 40-39-202, regardless of when the conviction or convictions occurred;
- (B) Has been convicted of a violent sexual offense, as defined in § 40-39-202; or
- (C) Has been convicted of an offense in which the victim was a child of twelve (12) years of age or less.

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

TN Code § 40-39-217

(a) (1) Any county, metropolitan form of government or municipality may, by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the legislative body, choose to establish a community notification system whereby certain residences, schools and child-care facilities within the county, metropolitan form of government or municipality are notified when a person required to register pursuant to this part as a sexual offender or violent sexual offender resides, intends to reside, or, upon registration, declares to reside within a certain distance of such residences, schools and child-care facilities.

(2) The legislative body of any county, metropolitan form of government or municipality that enacts a community notification system pursuant to this subsection (a) may, at the same time as the system is established, enact a notification fee of not more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) per year from each offender in the county, metropolitan form of government or municipality for the purpose of defraying the costs of the community notification. The notification fee shall be collected at the same time as the one-hundred-fifty-dollar administrative fee collected pursuant to § 40-39-204(b).

(b) Forms of notification a county, metropolitan form of government or municipality may elect to establish include:

- (1) Notification by the sheriff's office or police department to residents, schools and child-care facilities located within a specified number of feet from the offender's residence;
- (2) A community notification flyer, whether made by regular mail or hand delivered, to all legal residences within the specified area;
- (3) Posting a copy of the notice in a prominent place at the office of the sheriff and at the police station closest to the declared residence of the offender;
- (4) Publicizing the notice in a local newspaper, or posting electronically, including the internet;
- (5) Notifying homeowners associations within the immediate area of the declared residence of the offender; or
- (6) Any other method reasonably expected to provide notification.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the Tennessee bureau of investigation, a sheriff, or a chief of police from providing community notification under this section electronically or by publication or periodically to persons whose legal residence is more than the applicable distance from the residence of an offender.

What are the residence distance restrictions?

TN Code § 40-39-211

(a) (1) While mandated to comply with the requirements of this chapter, no sexual offender, as defined in § 40-39-202, or violent sexual offender as defined in § 40-39-202, shall knowingly establish a primary or secondary residence or any other living accommodation or knowingly accept employment within one thousand feet (1,000') of the property line of any public school, private or parochial school, licensed day care center, other child care facility, public park, playground, recreation center, or public athletic field available for use by the general public.

(e) Changes in the ownership or use of property within one thousand feet (1,000') of the property line of an offender's primary or secondary residence or place of employment that occur after an offender establishes residence or accepts employment shall not form the basis for finding that an offender is in violation of the residence restrictions of this section.

What are the employment distance restrictions?

TN Code § 40-39-211

(a) (1) While mandated to comply with the requirements of this chapter, no sexual offender, as defined in § 40-39-202, or violent sexual offender as defined in § 40-39-202, shall knowingly establish a primary or secondary residence or any other living accommodation or knowingly accept employment within one thousand feet (1,000') of the property line of any public school, private or parochial school, licensed day care center, other child care facility, public park, playground, recreation center, or public athletic field available for use by the general public.

(e) Changes in the ownership or use of property within one thousand feet (1,000') of the property line of an offender's primary or secondary residence or place of employment that occur after an offender establishes residence or accepts employment shall not form the basis for finding that an offender is in violation of the residence restrictions of this section.

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

Yes.

TN Code § 40-39-206

(d) For any offender convicted in this state of a sexual offense or violent sexual offense, as defined by this part, that requires the offender to register pursuant to this part, the information concerning the registered offender set out in subdivisions (d)(1)-(16) shall be considered public information. If an offender from another state establishes a residence in this state and is required to register in this state

pursuant to § 40-39-203, the information concerning the registered offender set out in subdivisions (d)(1)-(16) shall be considered public information regardless of the date of conviction of the offender in the other state. In addition to making the information available in the same manner as public records, the TBI shall prepare and place the information on the state's internet home page. This information shall become a part of the Tennessee internet criminal information center when that center is created within the TBI. The TBI shall also establish and operate a toll-free telephone number, to be known as the "Tennessee Internet Criminal Information Center Hotline," to permit members of the public to call and inquire as to whether a named individual is listed among those who have registered as offenders as required by this part. The following information concerning a registered offender is public:

(10) The name and address of any institution of higher education in the state at which the offender is employed, carries on a vocation or is a student;

Are online identifiers included on the public registry?

While offenders must register online identifiers [TN Code § 40-39-203 (i) (17)], this information is not included on the public registry.

Is a state-issued ID required to be labeled?

Yes, with a designation known to law enforcement.

TN Code § 40-39-213

(a) Every offender required to register pursuant to this part who is a resident of this state, and who is eligible, shall be responsible for obtaining a valid driver license or photo identification card that has been properly designated by the department of safety pursuant to § 55-50-353. Every offender eligible to receive the license or identification card shall always have the license or identification card in the offender's possession. If the offender is ineligible to be issued a driver license or photo identification card, the department shall provide the offender some other form of identification card or documentation that, if it is kept in the offender's possession, will satisfy the requirements of this section and § 55-50-353; such identification must be kept in the offender's possession at all times. If any offender is determined to be indigent, an identification card or other documentation in lieu of an identification card shall be issued to the offender at no cost.

TN Code § 55-50-353

When the department issues or renews a driver license or photo identification card to a sexual offender, violent sexual offender or violent juvenile sexual offender as required by § 40-39-213, the driver license or photo identification card shall bear a designation sufficient to enable a law enforcement officer to identify the bearer of the license or card as a sexual offender, violent sexual offender or violent juvenile sexual offender.

What is the cost of registration?

TN Code § 40-39-201

(7) The offender is subject to specified terms and conditions that are implemented at sentencing or, at the time of release from incarceration, that require that those who are financially able must pay specified administrative costs to the appropriate registering agency, which shall retain one hundred dollars (\$100) of these costs for the administration of this part and shall be reserved for the purposes authorized by this part at the end of each fiscal year, with the remaining fifty dollars (\$50.00) of fees to be remitted to the state treasury to be deposited into the general fund of the state; provided, that a juvenile offender required to register under this part shall not be required to pay the administrative fee until the offender reaches eighteen (18) years of age;

TN Code § 40-39-217

(a) (2) The legislative body of any county, metropolitan form of government or municipality that enacts a community notification system pursuant to this subsection (a) may, at the same time as the system is established, enact a notification fee of not more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) per year from each offender in the county, metropolitan form of government or municipality for the purpose of defraying the costs of the

community notification. The notification fee shall be collected at the same time as the one-hundred-fifty-dollar administrative fee collected pursuant to § 40-39-204(b).

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

TN Code § 40-39-203

(a) (1) Within forty-eight (48) hours of establishing or changing a primary or secondary residence, establishing a physical presence at a particular location, becoming employed or practicing a vocation or becoming a student in this state, the offender shall register or report in person, as required by this part. Likewise, within forty-eight (48) hours of release on probation or any alternative to incarceration, excluding parole, the offender shall register or report in person, as required by this part.

TN Code § 40-39-202

(18) "Secondary residence" means a place where the person abides, lodges, resides or establishes any other living accommodations in this state for a period of fourteen (14) or more days in the aggregate during any calendar year and that is not the person's primary residence; for a person whose primary residence is not in this state, a place where the person is employed, practices a vocation or is enrolled as a student for a period of fourteen (14) or more days in the aggregate during any calendar year; or a place where the person routinely abides, lodges or resides for a period of four (4) or more consecutive or nonconsecutive days in any month and that is not the person's primary residence, including any out-of-state address;

(32) "Within forty-eight (48) hours" means a continuous forty-eight-hour period, not including Saturdays, Sundays or federal or state holidays.

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

TN Code § 40-39-203

(a) (1) Within forty-eight (48) hours of establishing or changing a primary or secondary residence, establishing a physical presence at a particular location, becoming employed or practicing a vocation or becoming a student in this state, the offender shall register or report in person, as required by this part. Likewise, within forty-eight (48) hours of release on probation or any alternative to incarceration, excluding parole, the offender shall register or report in person, as required by this part.

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(18) "Secondary residence" means a place where the person abides, lodges, resides or establishes any other living accommodations in this state for a period of fourteen (14) or more days in the aggregate during any calendar year and that is not the person's primary residence; for a person whose primary residence is not in this state, a place where the person is employed, practices a vocation or is enrolled as a student for a period of fourteen (14) or more days in the aggregate during any calendar year; or a place where the person routinely abides, lodges or resides for a period of four (4) or more consecutive or nonconsecutive days in any month and that is not the person's primary residence, including any out-of-state address;

(32) "Within forty-eight (48) hours" means a continuous forty-eight-hour period, not including Saturdays, Sundays or federal or state holidays.