

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.

Washington D.C. Sex Offender Registry Requirements

What is the duration of registration?

DC Code § 22-4002

(a) Except as set forth in subsection (b) of this section, the registration period shall start when a disposition described in § 22-4001(3)(A) occurs and continue until the expiration of any time being served on probation, parole, supervised release, conditional release, or convalescent leave, or 10 years after the sex offender is placed on probation, parole, supervised release, conditional release, or convalescent leave, or is unconditionally released from a correctional facility, prison, hospital or other place of confinement, whichever is latest, except that:

- (1) The Agency may give a sex offender credit for the time the sex offender was registered in another jurisdiction;
- (2) The Agency may deny a sex offender credit for any time in which the sex offender is detained, incarcerated, confined, civilly committed, or hospitalized and for any time in which a sex offender was registered prior to a revocation of probation, parole, supervised release, conditional release, or convalescent leave; and
- (3) The registration period is tolled for any time the sex offender fails to register or otherwise fails to comply with the requirements of this chapter.

(b) The registration period shall start when a disposition described in § 22-4001(3)(A) occurs and continue throughout the lifetime of a sex offender who:

- (1) Committed a registration offense that is a lifetime registration offense;
- (2) Was determined to be a sexual psychopath under §§ 22-3803 through 22-3811;
- (3) Has been subject on 2 or more occasions to a disposition described in § 22-4001(3)(A) that involved a felony registration offense or a registration offense against a minor; or
- (4) Has been subject to 2 or more dispositions described in § 22-4001(3)(A), relating to different victims, each of which involved a felony registration offense or a registration offense against a minor.

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

DC Code § 22-4011

(a) The Metropolitan Police Department shall have the authority to release and disseminate the information obtained on sex offenders. The authorized activities of the Metropolitan Police Department under this section include, but are not limited to, active and passive notification to all or parts of the community concerning a sex offender, including but not limited to:

- (1) Victims and witnesses;
- (2) Public and private educational institutions, day care entities and other institutions or organizations that provide services to or employ individuals who may be victimized by a sex offender;

- (3) Members of the public or governmental agencies requesting information on identified individuals for employment or foster care background checks or similar purposes;
- (4) The public at large; and
- (5) Any unit of the Metropolitan Police Department and other law enforcement agencies.

(b) (1) (A) Active notification under this section refers to affirmatively informing persons or entities about sex offenders. Authorized means of active notification include, but are not limited to, community meetings, flyers, telephone calls, door-to-door contacts, electronic notification, direct mailings, and media releases.

What are the residence distance restrictions?

The Metropolitan Police Department does not have the authority to direct where a sex offender may live, work, or attend school. Unless the Courts have placed specific restrictions on the offender's release, he/she has a right to live wherever he/she chooses.

– Metropolitan Police Department

What are the employment distance restrictions?

The Metropolitan Police Department does not have the authority to direct where a sex offender may live, work, or attend school. Unless the Courts have placed specific restrictions on the offender's release, he/she has a right to live wherever he/she chooses.

– Metropolitan Police Department

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

Yes.

Address information is provided at the block level only; no specific addresses are provided.

– Metropolitan Police Department

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?

None.

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

For employment that exceeds 14 days in a row or more than 30 days in a year, the offender must make contact with the DC SOR within 3 days of the beginning of the employment so that it can be assessed, and a registration determination made.

Enrollment in any public or private education on either a full-time or part-time basis requires notification to the DC SOR within 3 days of the beginning of the schooling so that it can be assessed, and a registration determination made.

All convicted sex offenders coming to DC for employment, school or extended visitations, should make contact with the DC SOR. This does not mean that they will be required to register however it gives the registry staff the ability to assess the case, obtain the required documentation and provide it to the attorneys for a registration determination.

– DC Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency

DC Code § 22-4001

(9) "Sex offender" means a person who lives, resides, works, or attends school in the District of Columbia, and who:

(D) Committed a registration offense at any time in another jurisdiction and, within the registration period, enters the District of Columbia to live, reside, work or attend school.

(13) "Works" means engaging in any type of full-time or part-time employment or occupation, whether paid or unpaid, for a period of time exceeding 14 calendar days or for an aggregate period of time exceeding 30 days during any calendar year.

28 C.F.R. § 811.7

(a) (1) A sex offender must notify CSOSA within 3 days of the occurrence of any circumstance described in § 811.5(b), including but not limited to being sentenced to probation, being released (including any escape or abscondance) from incarceration or confinement, or entering the District of Columbia to live, reside, work, or attend school.

28 C.F.R. § 811.14

(c) The term "days" means business days unless otherwise specified.

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

Offenders are allowed to visit DC for less than 30 days without having to register with DC. Anything over 30 days requires notification to the DC SOR.

All convicted sex offenders coming to DC for employment, school or extended visitations, should make contact with the DC SOR. This does not mean that they will be required to register however it gives the registry staff the ability to assess the case, obtain the required documentation and provide it to the attorneys for a registration determination.

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