

## **SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION: National Requirements and State Registries**

**REGISTRATION PROCEDURES:** Sex offenders released from incarceration are required to register their addresses, along with other identifying information, with their resident state's law enforcement. When sex offenders move out of state, they become difficult to track. Most registration statutes require offenders to re-register with their local law enforcement agency each time they change their residencies. However, many statutes do not require verification of the offender's address.

**NATIONAL LEGISLATION:** As part of the federal crime bill approved by Congress in August 1994, the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act (the Jacob Wetterling Act) requires released sex offenders to register with law enforcement. The act further requires offenders convicted of crimes against children to verify their address to law enforcement annually. Those offenders deemed by states to be sexually violent predators must verify their address quarterly. All 50 states require sex offenders to register. Approximately one-half require offenders to verify their address with law enforcement, at least annually, after their initial registration.<sup>1</sup> States that do not meet the requirements of the Jacob Wetterling Act by September 1997, are subject to a 10 percent reduction in their Byrne formula grant funding.

**STATE REGISTRIES:** Almost all states maintain a central registry of resident sex offenders. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducted a telephone survey during the month of October 1996, to inquire about the number of registered sex offenders in each state.<sup>2</sup> The survey returned a total number of registered sex offenders in the United States: **185,393** (see Figure 1). The exact number may be higher due to some states not tracking sex offenders on a statewide level (Georgia, Nebraska, and Nevada). In these three states, sex offender information is maintained at the county level.

**TRACKING SEX OFFENDERS:** The need to track the movement of sex offenders from state to state has given rise to a nationwide central repository that contains the location, and other identifying information, of all registered sex offenders throughout the country. The Pam Lychner Sexual Offender Tracking and Identification Act of 1996, will implement such a registry, allowing the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to track sex offenders when they move. The law directs the FBI to establish a national data base of sex offenders within the next three years. The law also requires states that have not complied with all conditions of the Jacob Wetterling Act to provide the FBI with information about convicted sex offenders, including current addresses, fingerprints, and photographs.

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<sup>1</sup> Washington State Institute for Public Policy, *Sex Offender Registration: A Review of State Laws*, July 1996.

<sup>2</sup> The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children provided information for states not contacted in the survey.

The following table represents the number of registered sex offenders in each state:

**Figure 1: Registered Sex Offenders by State**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Alabama	57	Louisiana	1,935	Ohio	210
Alaska	1,326	Maine	55	Oklahoma	1,760
Arizona	8,174	Maryland	8	Oregon	1,966
Arkansas	68	Massachusetts <sup>3</sup>	0	Pennsylvania	1,000
California	68,100	Michigan	16,000	Rhode Island	273
Colorado	2,021	Minnesota	5,784	South Carolina	1,872
Connecticut	100	Mississippi	600	South Dakota	633
Delaware	328	Missouri	3,000	Tennessee	2,098
Florida	85	Montana	1,739	Texas	17,555
Georgia	Not known	Nebraska	Not known	Utah	4,000
Hawaii	425	Nevada	Not known	Vermont	25
Idaho	1,440	New Hampshire	590	Virginia	3,913
Illinois	6,534	New Jersey	3,523	Washington	9,912
Indiana	8,000	New Mexico	80	West Virginia	250
Iowa	1,400	New York	4,700	Wisconsin	1,400
Kansas	500	North Carolina	738	Wyoming	418
Kentucky	300	North Dakota	498	<b>TOTAL= 185,393</b>	

For further information contact Scott Matson at (360) 866-6000 extension 6380.

<sup>3</sup> Sex offender registration law effective October 1, 1996.