

**A better
understanding,
A better
community**

**An
Information Guide
To Help Educate
Municipalities
About Juveniles
Who Sexually Offend**

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Introduction

In 2005, the state of Wisconsin enacted **ACT 5**, giving law enforcement the discretion to provide the general public information pertaining to juveniles on the sex offender registry. It is believed that holding sexual offenders accountable for their whereabouts and activities will help decrease acts of sexual violence in our communities.

Although this law is an important step toward ending sexual violence in our communities, it is equally important to raise public awareness in identifying and preventing sexual violence. It is also crucial to be informed and educated about ways in which we, as individual citizens, can help protect ourselves and our loved ones from sexual assault.

This brochure was created to educate communities and local government on the issues surrounding successful juvenile sex offender reintegration. The information outlined will discuss how the notion of a “one size fits all” approach to managing juveniles who commit sexual offenses may be detrimental to public safety. The information will also discuss alternative solutions to managing this population while promoting **community safety**.



Why were residency restrictions created?

Residency restrictions were initially created to keep children safe by restricting an offenders' access to them. Research does not support a correlation between sex offender residency restrictions and a reduction in sexual violence. Many people believe that all sex offenders sexually re-offend, that treatment is ineffective, and that most victims are assaulted by a stranger. Research **does not support** these beliefs. (Letourneau et al., 2009; Levenson, 2007)

The Facts:

A Bureau of Justice Statistics (2000) report on sexual assaults of young children revealed that:

- ▶ **93%** of child sexual abuse victims know their abuser
- ▶ **34%** were family members
- ▶ **58%** were acquaintances
- ▶ **70%** of sexual assaults occur in the residence of the victim, the offender, or another individual.

Are all sex offenders the same, and do they pose the same risk to re-offend?

No. Sex offenders have different patterns of behavior and different risk profiles. There are a wide variety of people who engage in sexual abuse. Comprehensive assessment of sex offenders is important in determining their individual risk factors. Juveniles who engage in sex offenses differ from adult sex offenders in several ways:

- ▶ Juveniles have lower sexual recidivism rates
- ▶ Juveniles engage in fewer abusive behaviors over shorter periods of time
- ▶ Juveniles typically engage in less aggressive sexual behavior
- ▶ Juveniles are more responsive to treatment than adult sex offenders
- ▶ Juveniles do not appear to continue re-offending into adulthood, especially when provided with appropriate treatment
- ▶ Many juveniles do not have deviant sexual arousal and/or deviant sexual fantasies seen among certain adult sex offenders
- ▶ Most juveniles are not sexual predators, nor do most meet the accepted criteria to be identified as a pedophilic offender

Most juveniles are not sexual predators, nor do they meet the criteria to be diagnosed as a pedophile.

Did you know?

Fast Fact

Juvenile offenders are more responsive to treatment than most adult offenders, and they are less likely to re-offend sexually after treatment.

Are juveniles who commit sexual offenses **likely** to sexually re-offend?

No. Current research finds that juveniles sexually re-offend at a base rate of **7.5–14%**. In addition, research has shown that recidivism rates drop significantly when juveniles are engaged in specialized treatment programs. (Caldwell, 2007; Worling, 2000)

nearly

90% of all

juvenile offenders

will **not** sexually

re-offend.

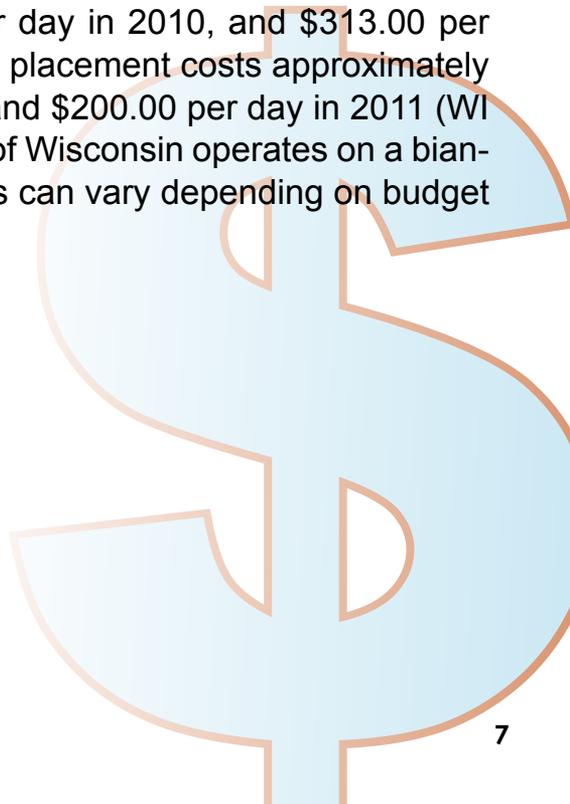
Therefore...

What **has** an impact on reducing juvenile sexual violence?

- ▶ Cognitive Behavioral Sex Offender Treatment Programs:
 - ▶ Identifying and reducing an offender's risk factors while teaching them behavioral modification techniques.
 - ▶ Successfully completing a sex offender treatment program.
- ▶ Best-practice strategies for community safety when working with juveniles who sexually offend:
 - ▶ Comprehensive assessment
 - ▶ Treatment
- ▶ Community supervision focused on:
 - ▶ Vocational & job training
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Employment
 - ▶ Housing
 - ▶ Stable/positive support systems

Are there **financial costs** for passing sex offender residency restrictions?

Yes. If the juvenile offender does not have an approved parental/guardian or independent residence, they are often placed in a residential care facility or group home. A residence may not be approved due to issues including: the victim living in the home, a current residency restriction and/or ongoing treatment needs that are unable to be met in the community due to a lack of community resources. The average cost of housing a juvenile offender in a residential care facility is \$298.00 per day in 2010, and \$313.00 per day in 2011. A group home placement costs approximately \$190.00 per day in 2010, and \$200.00 per day in 2011 (WI daily rate). Also, the State of Wisconsin operates on a biannual budget, so these rates can vary depending on budget adjustments.



Can sex offender residency restrictions **affect** Wisconsin's Sex Offender Registry compliance rate?

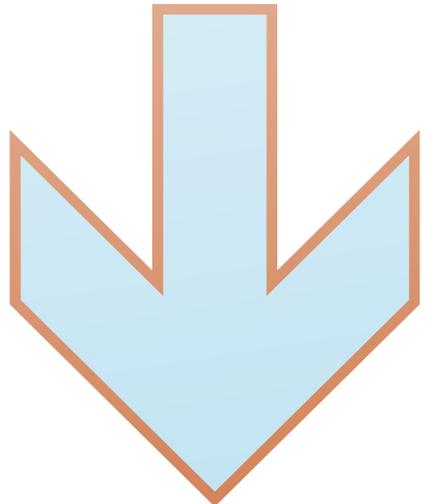
With more and more municipalities passing residency restrictions, the fear is that sex offenders who are no longer on active community supervision will begin to report false or no information to the registry. This could be detrimental to public safety. When a sex offender is compliant with the sex offender registry, law enforcement and supervising field staff (i.e. probation and parole officials, case workers) are aware of where the offender is living, and are able to monitor the offender's whereabouts and activities while they are in the community.

Wisconsin's current sex offender registration compliance rate (supervised and unsupervised) is approximately 90%.

Residency restrictions may lead to less accurate Sex Offender Registry reporting in Wisconsin.

Do residency restrictions have any **impact** on reducing sexual violence?

No. Research does not support a correlation between sex offender residency restrictions and a reduction in sexual violence. Some studies state that the consequences of passing ordinances can drive sex offenders out of the City/Town/Village, where they are likely to have a positive support system and access to treatment, employment/school and family support. This is then likely to result in a significant negative impact on the offender and his/her ability to succeed in the community. This potentially increases their risk to re-offend. Additionally, victims' advocacy groups, such as The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, have publicly opposed residency restrictions for these same reasons. (Letourneau et al., 2009; Levenson, 2007)





Are there other **alternatives** for municipalities to consider?

Many municipalities have begun to enact child safety or loitering zones, restricting a sex offender from being on or around a designated child safety zone (i.e., schools, day care centers, parks). Child Safety or loitering zones may be more effective in protecting the community by not hampering the essential elements for successful offender reintegration.

Fast Fact

Creating **child safety zones** may be more effective in protecting the community than residency restrictions.

Resources

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Inc.

600 Williamson St, Ste. N-2

Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Phone (608) 257-1516

TTY (608) 257-2537

Fax (608) 257-2150

wcasa@wcasa.org

www.wcasa.org

Office of Crime Victim Services, Wisconsin Dept. of Justice

P.O. Box 7951

Madison, WI 53707

(608) 264-9497 or Toll Free at (800) 446-6564

This office provides financial assistance to eligible crime victims, funding to support victim assistance programs, and assistance to individual victims of crime.

www.doj.state.wi.us/cvs

Valuable Websites

Division of Juvenile Corrections Public Website

The Wisconsin Division of Juvenile Corrections does have a statewide treatment directory that lists treatment providers by individual counties that specialize in working with juveniles who sexually offend for the state of Wisconsin.

www.wi-doc.com/index_juvenile.htm

General Sex Offender Public Website

Toll Free Access Line (800)398-2403

www.widocoffenders.org

Search by name or zip code

Most Wanted Website

www.mostwantedsexoffenders.wi.gov

National Sex Offender Registry

www.nsopr.gov

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For additional copies of this booklet or
for more information contact:

Wisconsin Department of Corrections

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<http://www.wi-doc.com>

<http://WIDOCoffenders.org>