

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Sex Offenders**

### **Why did the offender get so little time?**

Sex offenders in Washington State are sentenced to more time and serve more time than almost any other state. They must serve a minimum of 80% of their prison sentence. They then serve the remainder of their sentence in the community, this is called community supervision. As part of community supervision they report to a community corrections officer. They have specific conditions they are required to follow while on supervision. Conditions may include no contact with the victim(s) or witnesses, no contact with minors, not to be at any school or playground or other place where children congregate, no use of alcohol or drugs, attend chemical dependency treatment, maintain sex offender treatment. Conditions may even include geographic boundaries to further protect former victims and this may include the use of electronic monitoring (GPS) to document compliance. Use of urinalysis polygraph testing is often used to insure compliance with conditions of supervision. Length of supervision varies based on the crime of conviction and when they were convicted. For certain offenses sex offender may be on lifetime supervision.

### **Why is the offender living in my neighborhood?**

Law enforcement agencies have no authority to place restrictions on where sex offenders can live in any community. Sex offenders may be required to submit an address that must be approved by the Washington State Department of Corrections as part of their release from custody. This plan is investigated by DOC and may be denied should the address be deemed inappropriate for a variety of reasons. While you have been made aware of a sex offender living in your neighborhood, and are not happy about this fact, the vast majority of those committing sexual abuse have never been caught and continue to offend in your community. The best way to reduce the number of victims of sexual abuse is to take the time to educate yourself and your family to help to protect them from anyone who would harm them.

### **When is the sheriff's office going to move the offender out of my neighborhood?**

The sheriff's office lacks any authority in forcing an offender to move from one location to another. The sheriff's office is granted the authority to provide community notification about specific offenders considered a moderate or high risk to the community. The sheriff's office also verifies that all sex offenders are living where they are registered. We also actively seek out those offenders who fail to register or fail to make proper notification of an address change.

### **How often do sex offenders really re-offend?**

The truth about sex offenders re-offending is that as a group, sex offenders have the lowest recidivism rates of any convicted felons. Studies vary as to the actual percentages of re-offense but the majority of studies agree that most sex offenders are not convicted of new offenses. Those that do re-offend are likely to have lengthy prison sentences and could be civilly committed if found to meet the criteria of being a sexually violent predator.

### **Are you going to tell us if the offender moves out of this neighborhood, so we don't have to worry anymore?**

The sheriff's office does not notify the public when sex offenders move out of any community. If you would like to stay informed regarding the status of a specific offender, our suggestion is to visit the sheriff's office sex offender web site to look at current information. The fact that a sex offender has moved out of your neighborhood does not necessarily make your neighborhood a safer place. Again, taking universal precautions to educate yourself and your family to protect them from anyone who would harm them is the best course of action.

### **What do I tell my children about this offender?**

Don't tell them the scary details about the crimes. Keep information general, as it may protect them from others who would harm them. The goal is that your child is educated about being safe from everyone including strangers, acquaintances or family members who would victimize them. Here are some basic do's and don'ts regarding this offender

- Don't accept a ride from the offender
- Don't go into the home or yard of the offender
- Do tell your parents if this person offers you toys, money or gifts
- Do play with others and in groups when you can
- Call 911 if your parents aren't home and you are approached by this offender

### **Now that I know a sex offender lives in my neighborhood, what should I do differently to protect myself and my family?**

In this day and age it is important to remain vigilant to protect our families in a variety of ways. Finding out that there is a sex offender living in your community provides you with an opportunity to educate yourself and your family to help protect them from anyone who would harm them. We recommend that you use the resources provided in our community education packet as a start.

### **Why do some offenders not have conditions?**

All offenders are only bound by conditions of supervision while they are on active supervision by the Department of Corrections, Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (parole), or their probation officer. After completing active supervision the offender's only requirement is that of continuing to register as a sex offender as required by law.

### **How can I get information on other offenders?**

If you have questions about someone that you think may be a sex offender, please contact the sheriff's office registered sex offender unit. The more information you are able to provide about the person helps us in that we can search our local system, the state registry and also nationally.