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Summary of State Sex Offender Registry Dissemination Procedures

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As part of the National Sex Offender Registry Assistance Program (NSOR-AP), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) prepared *Summary of State Sex Offender Registries: Automation and Operation: 1998* (NCJ 177621). The report presents the status of sex offender registries in the 50 States and the District of Columbia as of April 1, 1998, prior to the award of Federal funds under NSOR-AP. The report is available on the BJS website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/ssxor.htm>.

BJS contacted the States for an update of their sex offender registry dissemination procedures to reflect conditions as of May 1, 1999. Copies of the original survey responses were sent to each State. The designated official was requested to review, sign, and return the information to BJS.

States were asked for information on existing State notification systems, use of the Internet, CD-ROMs, and hotlines. Of particular interest were those procedures used to disseminate information on sexual predators or the high risk offenders in each State's registry. Responses were received from all 50 States and the District of Columbia. Follow-up telephone contacts were made to gather further information when responses were unclear. A draft was then sent to the States for final review.

States were asked to review and update the four categories of dissemination procedures outlined on page 2. Responses to these categories are summarized in the table *Sex Offender Registry information: Dissemination and community notification, 1999*. All data shown in the summaries are current as of May 1, 1999.

Additional information for each State will be presented on the BJS website.

Highlights

- Over two-thirds of the States indicated full or partial electronic dissemination of State Sex Offender Registry (SOR) information to local law enforcement or other agencies responsible for offender supervision.
- Over half of all States have or plan to have an Internet site devoted to some aspect of SOR:
 - 15 States have publicly accessible Internet sites containing information on individual sex offenders in a searchable format.
 - 10 States have Internet sites accessible only to law enforcement agencies or containing information that pertains only to the registry and not to individual offenders.
 - 5 States without a SOR Internet site are planning to develop one.
 - The remaining 20 States and the District of Columbia indicated that they did not currently have an Internet site with SOR information and provided no information as to whether one was planned.
- California, Florida, New York, and Wisconsin are the only States to have a Sex Offender Information Hotline. California is the only State to provide a CD-ROM of registered sex offenders for public inspection.
- Over 60% of the States reported that citizens may make requests (usually written) to receive information on a specific offender or list of offenders or may view the registry at the discretion of local law enforcement agencies. In many of these States, citizens had to demonstrate a need to know.
- In at least four States, litigation has limited public dissemination of some or all individual sex offender information.

• **Dissemination to law enforcement and criminal justice agencies**

States summarized how sex offender information is transmitted from the registry to local law enforcement agencies. Responses ranged from extensive electronic transmission to all local law enforcement agencies by the State SOR to hard copies mailed to local agencies by request only.

• **Dissemination procedures to organizations serving children, the elderly, and the mentally ill**

The States reported numerous methods of dissemination and notification from the local law enforcement agencies to schools and other child welfare and youth serving organizations.

• **Dissemination procedures to the general public**

Scope: Community notification is open to a variety of interpretation by the States. In over half the States, community notification is permitted for specific types of offenders,

such as high risk offenders, violent or habitual offenders, sexual predators, and child sexual offenders, and sexual predators. Information on sex offenders other than those listed above is generally provided to local law enforcement agencies, victims, and schools and other youth service organizations. In other States local law enforcement is given significant latitude when it comes to releasing offender specific information to communities and the general public.

Method of disclosure (other than Internet sites): The States reported a wide variety of methods for disseminating SOR information to the community and general public. Methods include the following: sending or posting fliers in the offender's residential district; law enforcement officers conducting door-to-door notification; community meetings; placing newspaper ads; and so on.

• **Internet website**

The States indicated whether a website had been established, whether it contained information on specific offenders, and whether it was accessible to the public.

Information shown in this Summary was collected for research purposes and was not intended for assessment of compliance with the community notification requirement (Megan's Law) of the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act (Jacob Wetterling Act). No inference is intended or should be made from BJS' inclusion of information provided by the States in the Summary with respect to whether a jurisdiction's community notification provisions comply with the Jacob Wetterling Act. Unless otherwise noted, information provided in this Summary is accurate as of May 1, 1999. For the most complete and recent information regarding a particular State's Sex Offender Registry contact the responsible agency in that State.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D., is director.

BJS Factsheets summarize or update frequently requested information from larger data collection programs.

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Sex Offender Registry information: Dissemination and community notification, 1999

State	Dissemination from State SOR to local law enforcement agencies	Notification by local law enforcement agencies	Internet website
Alabama	electronic fliers	When an offender qualifies for community notification (those convicted of rape, sodomy, sexual torture, sexual abuse, child sexual abuse and incest, when victim is under age 18 and the offender is over age 20), fliers with the offenders photo are mailed to everyone living within 1,000 ft. of his home (in cities), 1,500 ft. in towns, and 2,000 ft. in rural areas. Citizens may also view fliers at local law enforcement agencies.	< http://www.gsiweb.net >
Alaska	electronic U.S. mail, E-mail	In addition to a public access Internet site, the public may also obtain information from the local police station, and they may receive hard copy reports on individual sex offenders through the SORCR office in response to individual requests.	< http://www.dps.state.ak.us/sorcr/ >
Arizona	electronic	Each law enforcement agency keeps a notebook on registered sex offenders residing in that jurisdiction. Citizens may ask to see the file and usually have to demonstrate a need to know. Access is at the discretion of the law enforcement agency. Community notification focuses on "neighborhoods" at risk rather than specific organizations or victim types. The level of notification is based on a review of the individual's risk assessment.	New legislation mandates the Department of Public Safety to develop an Internet website with information on all level 2 and 3 offenders. The anticipated date of completion is January 2000.
Arkansas	electronic	Community notification is conducted by local law enforcement agencies in accordance with guidelines developed by the Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence Commission. Notification to organizations, schools and institutions is made for offenders determined to be medium or high risk offenders. In some cases schools may notify parents of information received from a law enforcement agency.	As of January 1999, the Arkansas Crime Information Center website provides information on the Arkansas law, the offenses requiring registration, and the number of registered offenders in a given county, but did not post data on individual offenders.
California	electronic	Notification is the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency where the offender resides. Legislation specifies the conditions for limited notification to organizations or to specific individuals or for broader public advisories and notification on high risk sex offenders.	
Colorado	electronic	Notification is the responsibility of local law enforcement agencies. They may notify organizations, individuals and the general public "for reasons of public protection." SOR information is considered a public record.	
Connecticut	electronic	Under legislation effective October 1, 1998, two procedures for public access were established: (1) a copy of the sex offender registrations became available for public inspection in law enforcement agencies serving the sex offender's residence municipality, and (2) the Statewide sex offender registry on the Internet was established on 1/1/99.	< http://www.state.ct.us/dps/ >
Delaware	electronic	Notification measures are based on the offender's assigned risk level which is determined by a risk assessment performed by the State Attorney General's Office. For Tier II (moderate risk) offenders notification consists of searchable records available to the public, and may also include community notification. For Tier III (high risk) offenders, notification consists of both searchable records available to the public and community notification.	< http://www.state.de.us/dsp/sexoff/index.htm > The site has photo capability, but as of 5/99 no photos were posted.
District of Columbia	hard copy	There is no public access to SOR information. Community notification procedures are being developed by the police department and an interagency task group to reflect new legislation under development and the police department reorganization. DC law permits community or organizational notification only for offenders with formal risk classifications of Level 2 (moderate risk) or Level 3 (high risk).	
Florida	electronic	For those offenders classified as "sexual predators" the sheriff or chief law enforcement officer of the jurisdiction where the predator will reside is required to notify the public (and organizations) "in a manner deemed appropriate" in addition to the mandatory notification to all schools and daycares within a one-mile radius of a sexual predator's residence within 48 hours of law enforcement's notification to the SOR. Fliers are disseminated for community notification of sexual predators.	< www.fdle.state.fl.us/ >
Georgia	electronic	Public access is at the discretion of the local sheriff. Legislation states that the sheriff "shall release relevant information collected under this Code section that is necessary to protect the public..." and stipulates "nothing herein shall prevent any sheriff from posting this information in any public building."	A website was launched in May 1998. < http://www.ganet.org/gbi/disclaim.html >

Sex Offender Registry information continued

State	Dissemination from State SOR to local law enforcement agencies	Notification by local law enforcement agencies	Internet website
Hawaii	electronic and by phone	Hawaii's legislation specifies the specific items of SOR data that are to be accessible to public. Information is integrated into the Criminal History Public Access facility, which can be used by the general public for background checks. Public information on registered sex offenders is available to schools, and organizations serving children, the elderly, the mentally ill, or other vulnerable populations at the HCJDC office and at the main county police stations.	
Idaho	electronic	The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) makes affirmative notification to the Departments of Education and Health and Welfare and provides schools and organizations working with youth, women and/or vulnerable populations with free public access to State-wide lists and responses to individual inquiries. The general public may inquire whether an individual is a registered sex offender, by submitting a written inquiry to the DLE or the local sheriff. Name checks and lists are \$5 per query, \$10 with photo.	
Illinois	electronic	County sheriff's and the Chicago Police Department provide quarterly lists of sex offenders to all schools, child care facilities, and to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Local law enforcement agencies provide public access to the list of sex offenders residing or working in the county. Any law enforcement agency may provide SOR information to any person or entity likely to encounter the offender.	Legislation (pending the governor's signature) requires the ISP to establish a website with information for all sex offenders to register in Illinois.
Indiana	local agency must make queries; hard copy provided	The Sex and Violent Offender Registry (SVOR) data and all updates are sent (in hard copy) to all public and private schools, the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and their licensees, and to agencies that work with children and have requested copies. The general public may access SVOR data at public libraries (in hard copy) and on the Internet.	< www.state.in.us/cji/registry/index.html >
Iowa	electronic	Current legislation allows registry information to be disseminated from sheriffs' offices and police departments. Affirmative public notification by a local law enforcement agency requires prior authorization by Iowa DPS. For registrants classified as "at risk" affirmative public notification may include "notification of agencies or organizations in the community in which the registrant lives, is employed or attends school..." The offender receives prior notice of any public notification plans and may appeal.	Information pertaining to the registry is available as of 5/99. Individual offender information is anticipated to be accessible to the public in October 1999.
Kansas	electronic dissemination under construction	Affirmative notification to schools and relevant organizations is the responsibility of local law enforcement. Members of the public may also inspect registration records at a local sheriff's office or at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation.	The Kansas SOR website is operated by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) < http://www.ink.org/public/kbi/kbisexpage.html >
Kentucky	electronic, U.S. mail to rural agencies without electronic capability	The sheriffs are responsible for notifying the general public in their jurisdiction of the "high risk" offender by whatever means they deem applicable. The use of Statewide media outlets is authorized as well as any other means that may be made available in the future. Sheriffs are also authorized to release information concerning moderate risk offenders to schools and agencies such as daycare centers and other organizations dealing with children, as well as to victim advocacy groups.	A website is under development intended to allow public access to information concerning high risk offenders. This site will have sufficient security features in place as to allow those law enforcement/criminal justice agencies that currently do not have access to Kentucky's LINK system to access information concerning sex offenders.
Louisiana	U.S. mail in response to specific queries	Citizens may make public record inquiries to the local law enforcement agencies or to the registry. Also, individuals may be informed directly through community notification provisions that require the offender to give notice of the crime for which he was convicted, his name and his address to at least one person in every residence or business in a one mile radius of his residence in a rural area, and three square block area in an urban or suburban area.	
Maine	U.S. mail	The information in Maine Registry is based on conviction data and is therefore considered a public record, available to citizens through a request to a State or local law enforcement agency. Affirmative notification of schools and organizations is the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency where the offender resides. The DOC also provides community notification.	

Sex Offender Registry information continued

State	Dissemination from State SOR to local law enforcement agencies	Notification by local law enforcement agencies	Internet website
Maryland	electronic	When a child sexual offender registers with the local law enforcement agency, the agency is required to notify the county school superintendent who then notifies school principals. The local law enforcement agency may also notify (as necessary to protect the public interest) community organizations, religious organizations, or any organization that relates to children or youth. Written requests for the registry are mailed or faxed to the Sex Offender Registry Unit.	Yes, but for information only. It does not include any offender-specific information.
Massachusetts	electronic	There are three procedures by which the general public can have access to SOR data: 1) by a written request to the Criminal History Systems Board for information on a specific individual; 2) through community notification usually reserved for high risk offenders only; and 3) through an in-person request at the local police department.	
Michigan	electronic	Listings by zip code of the registered offenders within a jurisdiction are available for inspection by the general public during normal business hours at State Police posts, local law enforcement agencies, and sheriffs' departments. Information is also available through the Internet.	<www.mipsor.state.mi.us> and <www.msp.state.mi.us>
Minnesota	electronic	All law enforcement agencies in the State are required to have a formal policy on community notification. In general, for Level 1 (low risk) offenders, information is shared only with law enforcement, victims and witnesses. For Level 2 (moderate risk) offenders, schools, daycares and other organizations are notified. For Level 3 (high risk) offenders, thorough community notification, including community meetings is conducted. The DOC provides an offender fact sheet with photo. The DOC also plans to post Level 3 (absconding offenders, offenders who move frequently or who are in violation of the registration law) on a website on August 1, 1999.	Yes, but not with information on offenders. The DOC currently has a secured website for law enforcement and corrections with detainer information.
Mississippi	U.S. mail, phone or fax	Members of the general public can request to access State registry information or to the information maintained by the sheriff's department at the local level. Law enforcement agencies are authorized to release SOR information when the release is necessary for public protection, and the law directs both local sheriffs and the DPS to "make available to any person upon request the name, address, place of employment, crime for which convicted, and date of conviction for any registrant."	
Missouri	electronic	Upon request, a local law enforcement agency will provide a complete list of the sexual offenders registered within that agency's jurisdiction to any member of the public. Affirmative notification of schools or other youth serving organizations is a local law enforcement responsibility.	
Montana	electronic dissemination under construction	Community notification is conducted by local law enforcement agencies. It is discretionary for Level 2 offenders and mandatory for Level 3 offenders. The State Department of Justice is currently developing policies for public access to criminal history records.	No. However a website is a goal the Montana Department of Justice is working towards.
Nebraska	No direct online access to SOR data, information provided upon request	Sex Offender Registry information is provided to law enforcement, schools and daycare centers. There are three levels of notification based on a formal risk assessment of the sexual offender's likelihood of becoming a repeat offender.	
Nevada	primarily electronic, but some mail and fax	Citizens may submit by-name queries about individuals to the SOR. For Tier 3 (high risk) offenders, the law enforcement agency where the offender resides notifies not only other law enforcement agencies, schools, and youth organizations, but also the general public "through means designed to reach members of the public likely to encounter the sex offender." Additional provisions apply for those who commit sexual offenses against minors.	

Sex Offender Registry information continued

State	Dissemination from State SOR to local law enforcement agencies	Notification by local law enforcement agencies	Internet website
New Hampshire	electronic	New Hampshire law permits a local law enforcement agency to notify community organizations where an offender plans to reside only if the offender has been convicted of aggravated sexual assault against a child under the age of 13. A public access list is published monthly by SOR to local law enforcement of those offenders convicted of certain specified offenses. The local law enforcement agency can disseminate this list to any member of the public that requests it.	
New Jersey	electronic	Since October 1994, community notification has been conducted for Level 3 (high risk) sexual offenders. Risk levels are determined through use of the Registrant Risk Assessment Scale, developed by mental health and legal experts, and supplemented by a detailed manual explaining criteria, weighting, and giving examples. For offenders assessed as high risk, local law enforcement agencies conduct community notification, tailoring it to those members of the public likely to encounter the offender.	
New Mexico	electronic	Effective July 1, 1999, sex offender information for persons convicted of certain sex offenses that were committed on or after July 1, 1999 will be available to the public.	
New York	U.S. mail, phone queries	Community notification is at the discretion of local law enforcement, based on the offender's risk assessment level (RAL). The RAL also determines the amount and scope of information released. The local law enforcement agency has discretion for notification to any "entities with vulnerable populations" concerning offenders at risk levels 2 and 3. The State semi-annually publishes a subdirectory of level 3 offenders which is available to view at local law enforcement agencies.	< http://www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us > The site is does not contain information on individual offenders.
North Carolina	electronic	Sex offender registration information and the registry are "public record information" and open for public inspection. Citizens may obtain a copy of the Statewide registry by making a written request to the State's Division of Criminal Information (DCI) and paying a fee, or obtain a copy of a countywide registry by making a written request to the appropriate sheriff and paying a fee.	< http://sbi.jus.state.nc.us/sor >
North Dakota	hard copy	The list of registered offenders is a confidential record, but local law enforcement agencies must release information from the list to the public if the agency determines that the offender is a risk to the public and disclosure is necessary for public protection. Disclosure of "nonregistration information" (from criminal history records) is also permitted. Work is underway for developing guidelines for risk assessment and community notification procedures.	No, not for public access. Internet access is restricted to law enforcement.
Ohio	hard copy	For sexual predators and habitual sexual offenders subject to notification, the local sheriff notifies in writing all occupants of residences adjacent to the offender's place of residence, and additional neighbors within any category the Attorney General rules a "specified geographical notification area." Generally registration information the local sheriff has on sexual predators and habitual sexual offenders, subject to notification, and sexually-oriented offenders is public record open to inspection.	
Oklahoma	U.S. mail	The Oklahoma SOR data is considered a public record. Citizens can write, phone or fax a query about a specific individual to the central SOR unit and get a response. Members of the public can also view SOR files in the DOC's Oklahoma City office. Since November 1, 1998, the DOC makes hard copies of the full registry available to the public for a fee (to cover copying costs) and citizens can view the registry files for their jurisdiction at their local law enforcement agency.	The placement of the SOR on the DOC website is planned for late 1999, early 2000.
Oregon	electronic, searchable by name and date of birth only	While the offender is under supervision by a corrections agency the corrections agency is responsible for community notification, provided the offender has been determined to be predatory. If the offender is off supervision then law enforcement is responsible for notifying the community, provided the offender has been determined to be predatory in conjunction with the Department of Corrections. Legislation to increase public access is being proposed for the 1999 Oregon legislative session.	The public will have a "look only" access. Criminal justice agencies will be allowed to view all information OSP has on file regarding Oregon sex offenders through a password protected website.
Pennsylvania	hard copy	As of 5/99, community notification is conducted by the appropriate State or municipal law enforcement agency for both sexually violent predators and out-of-State offenders subject to notification. The State Police prepare the flier, and the local State Police or municipal department notifies qualifying neighbors, and maintains records of those notified. Community meetings may be held. Fliers are available upon in-person requests to the local law enforcement agency. [A June 30, 1999 Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision found the Sexually Violent Predator provisions of PA's Megan's Law to be "...violative of the procedural due process guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment." All provisions of Megan's Law pertaining to Sexually Violent Predators were struck from the law.]	

Sex Offender Registry information continued

State	Dissemination from State SOR to local law enforcement agencies	Notification by local law enforcement agencies	Internet website
Rhode Island	electronic	For Risk Level II (moderate risk) offenders; schools, daycares, and other organizations that serve people whom the offender might victimize are notified. For schools and daycare centers, law enforcement must notify each parent. For Risk Level III (high risk) offenders, the local law enforcement agency may notify individual members of community, establishments, and organizations. Notification methods include: fact sheets, fliers, news releases, advertisements, etc. Offenders subject to notification are so informed and entitled to judicial review.	
South Carolina	electronic	Local SOR information is open to public inspection upon a request to the county sheriff. Requests must be made in writing and include the name of the requestor and the name or address of the person about whom information is sought. Affirmative notification is the responsibility of the county sheriff where the offender lives and is to be conducted in the interests of public safety and preventing criminal activity.	< http://www.scattorneygeneral.com/public/registry.html >
South Dakota	electronic	The Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) sexual offender registration file is available to all law enforcement agencies on a twenty-four hour basis, but is not open to inspection by the public. However, the registration records collected by local law enforcement agencies and the registration lists provided to local law enforcement by DCI are public records and may be viewed at local law enforcement offices.	
Tennessee	electronic	For offenses committed prior to 7/1/97, the registry information is confidential and is released only to law enforcement officials. For offenses committed on or after 7/1/97, the registry information is by statute a public record. However, the Federal Court for the Middle District of Tennessee has held that Tennessee's provisions for notification violate offenders' due process rights, and that discretionary notification must be preceded by a hearing.	< www.ticic.state.tn.us/sexoffender.htm > The website is operated by the Tennessee's Internet Crime Information Center, but a Federal Court Order precludes releasing registry information on individual offenders on the website at this time.
Texas	electronic	Registry data is public information, but the street address, Social Security Number, phone number, driver's license number, and photo are not released. Newspaper notification is made on adult offenders only for convictions or adjudications on or after 9/5/95 where the victim was under the age of 17. Citizens may write to their local law enforcement agency or the Texas DPS requesting listings of registered offenders.	In January, 1999, SOR data was available (for a fee) on the Conviction Records Database of Texas DPS website. < http://records.txdps.state.tx.us/dps/default.htm >
Utah	electronic	Some registration data is public information. Citizens may write to the DOC's SOR unit for detailed information on registered offenders by zip code(s). There is a limit of two zip codes that may be queried. Registration data may be used by local law enforcement in affirmative notification to schools and youth organizations.	In July 1998 SOR data for registered offenders convicted after 4/29/96, was mounted on the DOC website. < http://www.cr.ex.state.ut.us/soreg/info_soreg.htm > By yearend, however, legal issues and constraints precluded adding new offenders.
Vermont	hard copy	Information contained in the registry is not accessible to the public directly. The registry does inform local law enforcement agencies when a registrant moves into their jurisdictions. The local agencies are authorized to release registry information to the public in the interest of public safety. A bill to provide community notification was introduced into the State Legislature in January 1999, but no action was taken.	Yes, but the Vermont website only provides information on the Registry. No data is posted on registered offenders. < http://www.dps.state.vt.us/cjs/s_registry.htm >
Virginia	electronic	Information regarding a specific person may be disseminated to citizens upon receipt of an official request form, which may be submitted directly to the Department of State Police or to the State Police through a local law enforcement agency. Schools and child care organizations are able to request and receive automatic notification (electronic or U.S. mail) of all registrations and reregistrations in their own or contiguous zip codes.	< http://www.vsp.state.va.us >
Washington	limited information available electronically	The State Police disseminates limited sex offender information to the public and only in response to a written "public information disclosure request." Based on the offender's risk level, the local law enforcement agency has the authority to notify neighbors and community groups for moderate and high risk offenders, and may issue press releases for high risk offenders. Some local law enforcement agencies also use Internet site for dissemination of information on registered offenders in their jurisdiction.	The only SOR data on a State website is on a restricted access site used for employment background checks.

Sex Offender Registry information continued

State	Dissemination from State SOR to local law enforcement agencies	Notification by local law enforcement agencies	Internet website
West Virginia	electronic	Individual citizens may receive SOR information upon application to (and approval by) the circuit court jurisdiction where the requestor resides. Legislation effective 6/15/98 makes lifetime registrants subject to community notification. The State Police also fax notification to school superintendents and child protective agencies of all registered offenders in their counties.	Yes. Four counties are currently online. <www.wvstatepolice.com>
Wisconsin	limited electronic information; bulletins prepared for high risk registrants	Victims and victims' families have direct access to the SORP information related to their offender(s) via 1-800-Victim Information Notification Everyday (VINE) and their Victim access number. The general public can access basic SORP data, on a specific person, using the same phone number, but they must provide the name, date of birth, and the Social Security Number or the driver's license number of the subject of their inquiry. Affirmative community notification is the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency.	
Wyoming	Inquiries processed through U.S. mail or phone	For offenders classified as being at high risk for reoffense, the district court authorizes the local law enforcement agency to provide public notification. The law in effect in April 1998 required an application from the district attorney, prior notice to the offender, and an in-camera hearing before a notification program could begin. A bill introduced in the 1998 legislature, and expected to be reintroduced in 1999 is reported to be compliant with all federal legislation regarding notification.	

Note: In addition to the dissemination procedures outlined in the table; California, Florida, New York, and Wisconsin have sex offender information hotlines. California is the only State to report the use of a CD-ROM containing sex offender information which is available to view by the public.