



Transforming Public Safety

A Call for Sex Offense Policy Modernization

Public safety is a paramount concern for all of us. As advocates for effective and just policies, we know that public sex offense registries are not achieving their intended goals. Instead, they divert resources from proven prevention measures and create new problems. We stand ready to assist policymakers in implementing changes that enhance community safety and support rehabilitation.

Public Safety and Prevention

We all want the same thing - an end to sexual violence and freedom from sexual harm. The question is whether we invest in strategies that actually prevent harm, or continue pouring money into a system that studies consistently show fails to improve safety while creating new problems. Smart public safety means choosing what actually protects communities.

Resources spent on the registry can be redirected to proven prevention measures, such as school-based prevention education, treatment for at-risk individuals, and support for survivors. The registry's failure to stop new offenses means vast resources are spent for very little return.

Fiscal Responsibility

Sex offense registries are an enormous financial burden with little to no safety payoff, and continuing to pour money into them is just bad governance. The numbers are sobering: nearly all states routinely allocate large portions of their state police budget to registry enforcement. What are taxpayers getting in return? Sex offense registries cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars per year nationwide with no measurable improvement in public safety outcomes. If any other government program burned through hundreds of millions of dollars without achieving its stated goals, we would demand immediate modernization or elimination. Let's apply the same standards of accountability to registry spending that we expect from every other taxpayer-funded program.

Accountability, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration

Our response to sexual harm must be both compassionate to survivors and effective at preventing future harm. Those who commit sexual offenses must be held accountable for the harm they caused, and this already occurs through prison sentences, probation, and mandated treatment. Once these are complete, we face a choice: support the stability that prevents reoffending or create conditions that increase risk. Genuine accountability means preventing future harm, not perpetual punishment that undermines safety. Survivors deserve a system that actually prevents harm, not just "sounds tough." We must replace policies we know haven't worked with evidence-based strategies that we know do work.

Collateral Damage and Community Costs

Our concern isn't just about people on the registry - it's about how the registry and related policy negatively affects everyone in the community. Registry restrictions contribute to homelessness and instability, which ironically make communities less safe. There is a human toll on families and children of registrants, because when an individual is on the registry, their loved ones often suffer alongside them. These innocent family members, be they children, partners or parents, often must move frequently, change schools, or live in fear of harassment due to their loved one's status. Policies that destabilize families and harm children contradict the child protection goals they claim to serve.



"One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results."

Milton Friedman, American Economist and Statistician

Our Asks

Refocus resources on prevention and survivor support.

Let's invest in what works. Our priority should be preventing the first offense, not endlessly punishing someone who has already been held accountable. That means funding things like school-based prevention programs, community awareness, better screening and counseling for at-risk youth, and robust services for survivors. Every dollar we spend on maintaining an ever-growing registry is a dollar we're not spending on these front-line protections.

Create a clear path off the registry for rehabilitated individuals.

People who pose no ongoing risk shouldn't remain branded for life. For example, someone who hasn't reoffended in 10 or 15 years and has proven their stability should have a way to earn removal from the registry. This rewards rehabilitation and lets law enforcement focus on those who truly need monitoring.

NARSOL's Expertise

We stand ready to assist policymakers in implementing these changes.

By focusing on what works, we can create safer communities, support rehabilitation, and ensure that resources are used effectively.

Together, we can change the status quo and build a system that truly protects the public.



References

<https://www.narsol.org/resources/narsol-publications/transforming-public-safety/>

Modernizing Public Safety: Results Over Intentions

To create truly safe communities, we must judge public safety policies by actual results rather than intentions.

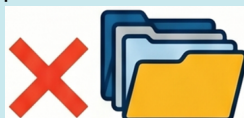


High Costs, No Safety Payoff

Registries cost taxpayers hundreds of millions annually with no measurable improvement

Misplaced Resources vs. Proven Prevention

Funding is diverted from school-based education and survivor support to maintain ineffective, ever-growing registries.



Registries



Education and Support

Focus Instead on Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Creating clear paths off the registry for rehabilitated individuals allows law enforcement to focus on those who truly need monitoring.



Destabilizing Families and Communities

Registry restrictions lead to homelessness and harm innocent family members, contradicting child protection goals.

