

# What You Should Know about Sex Offenders

## **Commonly Used Terms** ([www.atsa.com/ppOffenderFacts.html](http://www.atsa.com/ppOffenderFacts.html))

**Child Molester** -- The child molester is most often someone who is sexually attracted to adults, but may molest a young family member in a maladaptive attempt at meeting emotional needs. Many adults who molest a child they know were also abused as children, but could not or did not seek treatment. Thus they never addressed problems such as severe anger, lack of empathy, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy. Especially if treated, incestuous offenders are much less likely to commit a new sex crime.

**Juvenile Offender** -- A growing number of offenders are actually children themselves. The most common ways for youths to wind up on the registry are "Romeo and Juliet" relationships, "sexting," on phones or on social networking sites, or childish experimentation. Juveniles are highly responsive to treatment, and rarely re-offend as adults.

**Pedophile** -- Pedophiles are adults who are sexually attracted to prepubescent children. With therapy and behavioral management training, many pedophiles can successfully control their behavior, just as alcoholics can successfully stop drinking. True pedophilia is a relatively rare condition.

**Predator** -- Predators are persons who capture and sexually abuse children, usually outside of their family. These offenders often place themselves in positions of trust, authority, and easy access to youngsters that they do not know. Predators are usually not pedophiles, but instead enjoy inflicting pain, and have the highest recidivism rate (17%). Abductions by child predators are relatively rare, and *less than 1% of sex crimes involve murder*.

**Pervert** -- "a person whose sexual behavior is considered strange and unpleasant by most people" (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

## **Facts about Sex Offenders**

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1. *Not all sex offenders are the same.* ([www.csom.org/train/etiology/3/3\\_1.htm](http://www.csom.org/train/etiology/3/3_1.htm)) Yet the media and politicians constantly use words like pedophile, pervert and predator to describe all sex offenders.
2. *Not everyone on the registry has committed a sexual crime.* Streaking and public urination are both crimes that are admissible on the registry. One man found himself on the registry for grabbing a girl's arm to lecture her when she stepped out in front of his moving car! ("Man grabs girl's arm -now he's a sex offender." World Net Daily, 7/2/2005) [http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=45104](http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=45104)
3. *Plea agreements account for 95% of felony convictions.* Prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges often press defendants into pleading guilty to a lesser offense to avoid jail, end a costly lawsuit, or support their families. As a result, *people who might, in fact, be innocent of a sexual crime, will often plead guilty to the charge.* (U.S. Sentencing Commission's 2009 Sourcebook of Federal Sentencing Statistics, Table C) (<http://www.ussc.gov/ANNRPT/2009/SBTOC09.htm>)
4. The U.S. Department of Justice states the 3-year recidivism rate for sex offenders (rape or sexual assault) is only 5.3%. (*Recidivism of Sex Offenders Released from Prison in 1994*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003) (<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1136>)
5. Treatment can reduce sexual recidivism *over a 5 year period by 5 - 8%*. This may seem small, but consider this: There were about 210,000 rapes and sexual assaults in 2004. If only 100,000 of the perpetrators had undergone treatment, this could have been reduced by 5,000 to 8,000. "Thus, relatively small reductions in sexual recidivism rates can have a notable impact on the number of victims, even if the reduction in sexual recidivism is not "statistically significant." (Prentky, R. & Schwartz, B. (December, 2006). *Treatment of Adult Sex Offenders*. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence/Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.) [http://new.vawnet.org/category/Main\\_Doc.php?docid=690](http://new.vawnet.org/category/Main_Doc.php?docid=690)
6. *Future recidivism risk* can be reliably assessed using validated risk assessments and diagnostic tools. Thus only those who continue to be assessed as high risk need to be closely monitored more than a few years.
7. *Support systems help to reduce recidivism.* Former offenders need a stable home and work environment. This is something their families need also. Anything keeping them from support systems and accountability networks can be harmful. (USDOJ)
8. *Re-offense rate averages:* for auto theft 78.8%, possession/sale of stolen property 77.4%, burglary 74.0%, armed robbery 70.2%, larceny 74.6%, sex offenses 3.5%. (Bureau of Justice Statistics <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=17>)
9. *Online stalking and abduction are very rare.* Adults pretending to be teens account for only 3% of internet crime, and most child victims meet expecting to have sex. ([www.unh.edu/ccrc](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc))

## Facts about Public Registration

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1. 93% of sex offenses are committed by someone not on the registry. (USDOJ) Thus you could say the registry is at least 93% ineffective.
2. 90% of sex offenses against children under age 12 are committed by someone the child knows (and almost half of these offenders are a family member). In cases of sexual assault against ages 12 and older, 80% know the offender. (<http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/facts.aspx>)
3. Public registration requirements are creating a false sense of security. Law Enforcement resources have been stretched to the point where the small percentage of high-risk offenders *cannot be adequately monitored*.
4. The cost of maintaining the registry and the myriad other ineffective laws targeting former sex offenders reaches hundreds of millions of dollars each year (USDOJ).
5. "Megan's Law ineffective, study says." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 7, 2009. "... There is little evidence, despite the popularity of the sex-offender notification laws, that they are effective... Recent studies on sexual offender notification laws in New York and Arkansas reached similar conclusions."

## Children Who Are Sex Offenders

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1. More than a third of all child molestation is committed by children themselves. The U.S. Department of Justice finds the age with the greatest number of offenders is 14.6 years old. ("Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors" Finkelhor, Ormrod, and Chaffin. *OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, December, 2009. <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV171.pdf>). Would you want your child to end up on a public registry?
2. A 2007 review of a longitudinal data set of three cohorts of youth in Wisconsin found that of men who had contact with police for a sex offense as youth, only 8.5 percent had contact with police for a sex offense as adults. (Franklin E. Zimring, et al., *Sexual Delinquency in Racine: Does Early Sex Offending Predict Later Sex Offending in Youth and Young Adulthood?*, 6 *Criminology & Pub. Pol'y* 507-534 (2007))
3. Our justice system applies a double standard: A child is considered someone under the age of consent, *unless they are being prosecuted* (Franklin E. Zimring, *An American Tragedy: Legal Responses to Adolescent Sexual Offending*. Adolescent Development and Legal Policy Monograph Series, 2004)

## Other Important Facts

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1. Statistics show there is *no rise in sex crimes* during **Halloween**; kids are more likely to get hit by a car. (<http://bit.ly/Gjeig>)
2. Longer **punishment-driven sentencing** has not been proven to reduce recidivism; however *the cost to house these prisoners is tremendous*, at an estimated \$20-25,000 per year per inmate. (USDOJ)
3. *Laws passed and enforced after a person's conviction (ex post facto) are unconstitutional* on both the federal and state levels.
4. Recent, reliable studies indicate that **practically no child pornography offenders** (.013%) are actually at risk to commit contact sexual offenses involving other children. (Michael Seto and Angela W Eke, "The Criminal Histories and Later Offending of Child Pornography Offenders", 17 *Sexual Abuse: J Res. & Treatment* 2005)
5. **Residency restrictions** have not been proven effective at preventing child sexual abuse by registered sex offenders. In fact, by destabilizing this group, the restrictions are more likely to cause harm than to prevent it. (*Does JWRC support laws that prohibit sex offenders from living within a certain distance from schools, parks, or daycare centers?* Jacob Wetterling Resource Center, <http://www.jwrc.org/GetHelpNow>)