

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX OFFENDER NOTIFICATION

## *Why did I receive a sex offender notification?*

The Community Protection Act of 1990 (RCW 9A.44.130) requires a sex offender to register in the community where they live. Communities are notified when a Level 2 or Level 3 sex offender registers a new address. The law (RCW 9A.44.130) is intended to make the public aware about a particular offender, the offender's conviction(s), and to share resources to help keep communities safe.

## *Why didn't I receive a sex offender notification?*

Not every city or community mails out notification flyers. It is up to each law enforcement jurisdiction to determine how they notify the community. Some cities post the information on their websites, while others hand deliver flyers. (RCW 9A.44.130) For example, in King County, it is up to each jurisdiction to mail flyers to an area of 1,000 or more addresses within approximately one square mile of the offender's residence in unincorporated King County. Call your local police department or sheriff's office for more information.

## *Will I be notified when the sex offender moves?*

No. The law requires communities be notified when sex offenders move *into* a community, not when they move out. To further track a specific sex-offender, sex offender movements in your neighborhood or any specific address, information is available on Offender Watch, [waspc.org](http://waspc.org).

## *Why didn't I know about this sooner?*

Flyers are mailed out after a person registers as a sex offender, and after the law enforcement jurisdiction in which they register requests, receives, and reviews all original information about the offender's offense. This can take two weeks to several months. Once all the necessary information is reviewed, the law enforcement jurisdiction may or may not change the sex offender's level. This review must be complete and an in-person verification that the offender is in fact residing at his or her registered address, before a community is notified. The quickest way to get ongoing sex-offender information is through Offender Watch, [waspc.org](http://waspc.org).

## *Can I copy and distribute the notification?*

It is against the law (RCW 9A.44.130) to alter the notification flyer in any way. It is illegal to plaster the community by posting flyers everywhere. If the community believes that notification was not sufficient, community members should contact law enforcement or the sheriff's office to discuss the issue. If you believe other community members should receive a notification flyer, you may copy and distribute it (within reason).

### *Are there things I cannot do?*

Experts believe sex offenders are less likely to re-offend if they live and work in an environment free of harassment. Any actions taken against the individual named in the notification, including vandalism of property, verbal or written threats of harm; or physical violence against this person, his or her family, or employer, will result in arrest and prosecution of criminal acts. It is against the law (RCW 9A.44.130) to use this information in any way to threaten, intimidate, or harass registered offenders. Such abuse could end law enforcement's ability to notify communities.

### *I'm not happy about this notification!*

People respond in many different ways to receiving a sex offender notification. It is normal to feel upset, angry, and worried about a sex offender living in your community. The law (RCW 9A.44.130) was created to inform the public when a Level 2 or Level 3 sex offender moves into the community, and to provide that community with education and resources.

### *Should I attend the community notification meeting?*

At the meeting you will have an opportunity to hear different service providers speak about the particular offender moving into your area. Topics may vary, but in general include information and history of sex offender laws and information regarding the particular offender. (**Note:** Under HIPPA, the privacy of every individual is protected. Information about the offender's treatment, medication, or diagnosis is not releasable by law.) Attending the meeting also provides an opportunity to connect with other members of your community. This can lead to further conversations and future planning of community protection.

### *Who can I expect to see at the meeting?*

Members from local or county law enforcement; members from the Department of Corrections (DOC) and/or Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) if the offender is under supervision; a representative from a community victim advocacy agency; and possibly members of the local school district.

### *Will the offender be at the meeting?*

Offenders are strongly discouraged from attending the community notification meeting. On rare occasions a sex offender may be present, but are not part of the meeting agenda. Sometimes, family members and friends of the offender or victim may be present.

### *Where can I learn more about community protection?*

Find out what community protection programs your neighborhood has by calling your local police department, sheriff's office or the Sex Offender Management Team in King County. You can become involved in or start a neighborhood Block Watch, Citizens on Patrol, or other neighborhood safety program. Other information is available on [kcsarc.org](http://kcsarc.org).