

## **Penalties for Improper Use of Sex Offender Registry Information**

**Information contained in the Sex Offender Registry shall not be used to commit a crime against an offender or to engage in illegal discrimination or harassment of an offender. Any person who improperly uses Sex Offender Registry information shall be punished by not more than two and one-half years in the house of correction or by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or by both such fine and imprisonment.**

## **WHAT IS A SEX OFFENDER?**

A sex offender is any person who resides, works or attends an institution of higher learning in the Commonwealth and who has been convicted of a sex offense, or who has been adjudicated as a youthful offender or as a delinquent juvenile by reason of a sex offense, or a person released from incarceration or parole or probation supervision or custody with the department of youth services for such a conviction or adjudication, or a person who has been adjudicated a sexually dangerous person or a person released from civil commitment on or after August 1, 1981.

Sex offenders will be classified according to the degree of dangerousness they pose to the public and their likelihood for re-offense. An offender's classification will be:

**Level 1:** Where the Sex Offender Registry Board determines that the risk of re-offense by an offender is low and the degree of dangerousness posed to the public by that offender is not such that a public safety interest is served by public availability, the Board shall give that offender a Level 1 designation.

Information on Level 1 offenders will not be available to the public. Neither the police nor the Board has authority to disseminate information to the general public identifying a Level 1 offender.

Information identifying Level 1 offenders may only be given to the department of correction, any county correctional facility, the department of youth services, the department of social services, the parole Board, the department of probation and the department of mental health, all city and town police departments and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for law enforcement purposes.

**Level 2:** Where the Board determines that the risk of re-offense is moderate and the degree of dangerousness posed to the public is such that a public safety interest is served by public availability of registration information, it shall give a level 2 designation to the sex offender.

The public shall have access to the information regarding a level 2 offender through the Local Police Departments and through the Sex Offender Registry Board.

**Level 3:** Where the Board determines that the risk of re-offense is high and the degree of dangerousness posed to the public is such that a substantial public safety interest is served by active dissemination, it shall give a level 3 designation to the sex offender.

The public shall have access to the information regarding a level 3 offender through the Local Police Departments and through the Sex Offender Registry Board.

## **PARENTAL CONCERNS**

**Talk to your children about preventing sexual assault:** As a parent, you may feel a variety of emotions when you learn that a convicted sexual offender lives or works in your community. You may also have questions. Should you share this information with your children? **What can you say** that will not frighten youngsters?

### **The facts about child sexual abuse:**

- Most children (90 percent) know their offender.
- Half of all attackers are members of the child's family.
- Nearly all attackers (92 percent) are men and one quarter is age 40 or older.
- The average pedophile has 244 victims in his or her lifetime.
- Juveniles (under age 18) make up 40 percent of offenders of young children.
- One out of three girls and one out of five boys are sexually assaulted before age 16.

The experts say that **you need to talk to your children** about protecting themselves from sexual assault. But, **do not focus on one stranger** in the neighborhood. You should **teach personal safety skills** that will keep your children safe in various situations.

**Be calm and reassuring:** Be calm and reassuring when talking about personal safety with children. Teach your children to be cautious, alert and prepared - not fearful. Children feel less afraid when they have the skills, information, and confidence they need to act on their own behalf.

### **Tips to keep children safe:**

1. Teach **the Touching Rule:** "No one should touch your private parts except to keep you clean and healthy." Parents certainly may want to use the **anatomically correct terms** when defining "private parts," for example: penis and vagina. If using those words feels uncomfortable, you can describe private parts as **areas of the body covered by the child's bathing suit**.

2. **Teach children that they have the right to say 'No'** if someone breaks the Touching Rule, or makes them feel uncomfortable or confused – **even someone they know**. Then go and tell a trusted adult.
3. Create a family rule: "**We do not keep touching secrets.**" Your children need to know that you want them to tell you if someone tries to inappropriately touch them.
4. Be aware of your child's environment. **How well do you know the people who spend time with your child**, including baby sitters, day-care providers, after-school friends and their parents, relatives, and new friends?
5. Know **how to identify a possible predator**. Two common patterns of sex offenders are: 1) an adult more interested in relationships with children than adults, 2) a relative or friend who singles out one child for attention, gifts, or spending time.
6. **Teach children which adults can help if a child is in danger**. Provide specific examples such as a teacher, a school administrator, the person using a cash register at the mall, a mother or father accompanied by their children, or a police officer.

#### **More ways to keep kids safe:**

Only a small percentage of sexual assault involves abduction by a stranger. It is still important, however, to **talk about kidnap prevention with your children**. Offenders use lures, tricks, or physical force to abduct children for sexual purposes. An example of a trick is an abductor offering a ride that, he or she says, the parents have Okayed. **Older children and teens are more vulnerable to stranger abduction** than young children.

1. Teach **the buddy system**. Children should learn when it is safer to be with a friend or trusted adult than it is to be alone. Some examples of when to use the buddy system are while walking to school or when using a public bathroom.
2. Teach children to **check with the adult in charge** before changing plans or going anywhere - even if they're going with a familiar adult.
3. Children should **know how to use the telephone**. All school-age children should learn to dial "0" and "911" for help and how to use a pay phone.
4. **Role-play** with children. Children learn by doing, not just talking. Kids should experience what it feels to say "no" in difficult situations.

**Use the "what if" game** to help children think of how they would respond to situations such as: "What if the school bus doesn't arrive on time?" "What if the after-school baby-sitter isn't there to meet you?" "What if a stranger asks you to help him find his lost puppy?"

**Describe real-life situations** such as confronting a stranger while walking to school or getting separated from family or friends in crowds.

Have children **practice reactions to threatening situations**. For instance, in the case of a potential abduction, children should learn to yell, "I need help! This person is trying to harm me!"

**Show children how to stay at least an arm's length away** from strangers who approach them.

**Review and practice often:** Like learning to ride a bike, kids need to practice safety skills in order to use them correctly. Children do not learn well from one-time presentations. Research shows that **safety skills need to be reviewed five to ten times every year**.

**Keep talking to your children:** These safety tips are meant to serve as preliminary guidelines. The most important thing is to **continue to talk with your children**. Ask them if they feel safe and comfortable. If they don't, ask why.

**Teaching personal safety at school:** Encourage the introduction of a child personal safety program in your school system. Personal safety programs provide children, parents, and teachers with the right words to discuss the prevention of injury, abduction, and sexual assault. **Ask your school officials to add child personal safety training to your school curriculum**. Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund offers training in Talking about Touching, a school-based personal safety curriculum that involves parents, teachers, children, and others who work with them.

**For more info about keeping children safe:** Contact the Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund at (888) 775-4KID and ask for the brochure "10 Ways to Keep Children Safer." It's available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese. The English brochure also is available at [www.mctf.org](http://www.mctf.org).

## **"MY 8 RULES FOR SAFETY"**

1. Before I go anywhere, I always check first with my parents or the person in charge. I tell them where I am going, how I will get there, who will be going with me, and when I'll be back.
2. I check first for permission from my parents before getting into a car or leaving with anyone -- even someone I know. I check first before changing plans or accepting money, gifts, or drugs without my parents' knowledge.
3. It is safer for me to be with other people when going places or playing outside. I always use the "buddy system."
4. I say NO if someone tries to touch me in ways that make me feel frightened, uncomfortable, or confused. Then I go and tell a grown-up I trust what happened.
5. I know it is not my fault if someone touches me in a way that is not O.K. I don't have to keep secrets about those touches.
6. I trust my feelings and talk to grown-ups about problems that are too big for me to handle on my own. A lot of people care about me and will listen and believe me. I am not alone.
7. It is never too late to ask for help. I can keep asking until I get the help I need.
8. I am a special person, and I deserve to feel safe.

### **My rules are:**

- Check First
- Use the "Buddy System"
- Say No, Then Go & Tell
- Listen to my feelings, and talk with grown-ups I trust about my problems and concerns.

