



Sex Offender Housing Restrictions

Twenty Findings of Research on Residential Restrictions for Sex Offenders and the Iowa Experience with Similar Policies

1. Housing restrictions appear to be based largely on three myths that are repeatedly propagated by the media: 1) all sex offenders reoffend; 2) treatment does not work; and 3) the concept of "stranger danger." Research does not support these myths, but there is research to suggest that such policies may ultimately be counterproductive. Sex offender residence restrictions. A Report to the Florida Legislature, October 2005, Jill S. Levinson, Ph.D.
2. Research shows that there is no correlation between residency restrictions and reducing sex offenses against children or improving the safety of children. Iowa County Attorneys Association
3. The resulting damage to the reliability of the sex offender registry does not serve the interests of public safety. Iowa County Attorneys Association
4. There is no demonstrated protective effect of the residency requirement that justifies the huge draining of scarce law enforcement resources in the effort to enforce the restriction. Iowa County Attorneys Association
5. Many prosecutors have observed that the numerous negative consequences of the lifetime residency restriction has caused a reduction in the number of confessions made by offenders in cases where defendants usually confess after disclosure of the offense by the child. In addition, there are more refusals by defendants charged with sex offenses to enter plea agreements. Plea agreements are necessary in many cases involving child victims in order to protect the children from trauma of the trial process. Iowa County Attorneys Association
6. Recommendation 1: Shared Living Arrangements appear to be a frequently successful mode of containment and treatment for higher risk sex offenders and should be considered a viable living situation for higher risk sex offenders in the community.... Recommendation 2: Placing restrictions on the location of correctionally supervised sex offender residences may not deter the sex offender from re-offending and should not be considered as a method to control sexual offending recidivism. Report on Safety Issues Raised by Living Arrangements for and Location of Sex Offenders in the Community; Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Sex Offender Management Board
7.the number of sex offenders who are unaccounted for has doubled since the law went into effect. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
8. There is no accommodation in the current statute for persons on parole or probation supervision. These offenders are already monitored and their living arrangements approved. Iowa County Attorneys Association
9. [This policy] is contrary to well-established principles of treatment and rehabilitation of sex offenders....These goals are severely impaired by the residency restriction, compromising the safety of children by obstructing the use of the best known corrections practice. Iowa County Attorneys Association
10. The sex offender residency restriction was a very well intentioned effort to keep the children of our communities safe from sex offenders. It has, however, had unintended consequences that effectively decrease community safety. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
11.some offenders are attempting to comply by providing descriptions of where they are actually living...."under the 7th street bridge," "truck near river," "rest area mile marker 149," "Flying J, in truck," "in tent, S side of I-80," "RV in old K-Mart parking lot," "I-35 rest area,"....Two listed Quick Trips.... For the first time, sex offender treatment providers tell us, sex offenders are absconding in larger numbers. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
12. When a brutal sexually violent crime occurs, such as the one that occurred in Iowa last year, our societal tendency is to focus all our resources and energy on stopping offenders. The long-term solutions to eradicating sexual violence from our society, however, do not lie in measures taken to stop re-offense, but rather in preventing sexual violence from happening in the first place. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
13. ... the Board of the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault joined the Iowa County Attorneys Association in stating that these unintended consequences warrant replacing the residency restriction with more effective measures. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
14. Housing restrictions have passed in most localities with little resistance. Child safety is rightly the primary concern when sex offender restrictions are imposed. It seems to make sense that decreasing access to potential victims would be a feasible strategy to preventing sex crimes. There is no evidence, however, that such laws are effective in reducing

- recidivistic sexual violence. On the other hand, such laws aggravate the scarcity of housing options for sex offenders, forcing them out of metropolitan areas and farther away from the social support, employment opportunities and social services that are known to aid offenders in successful community re-entry. Sex offender residence restrictions. A Report to the Florida Legislature, October 2005, Jill S. Levinson, Ph.D.
15. Despite overwhelming public and political support, there is no evidence that proximity to schools increases recidivism, or, conversely, that housing restrictions reduce reoffending or increase community safety. Sex offender residence restrictions. A Report to the Florida Legislature, October 2005, Jill S. Levinson, Ph.D.
 16. Based on the examination of level three re-offenders, there were no examples that residential proximity to a park or school was a contributing factor in any of the sexual re-offenses noted... Enhanced safety due to proximity restrictions may be a comfort factor for the general public, but it does not have any basis in fact...it appears that a sex offender attracted to such locations for purposes of committing a crime is more likely to travel to another neighborhood on order to in secret rather than in a neighborhood where his or her picture is well known. Level Three Sex Offenders Residential Placement Issues, 2003 Report to the Legislature, Minnesota Department of Corrections
 17. Having such restrictions in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul would likely force level three offenders to move to more rural areas that would not contain nearby schools and parks but would pose other problems, such as high concentration of offenders with no ties to the community; isolation; lack of work, education and treatment options; and an increase in the distance traveled by agents who supervise offenders. Again, no evidence points to any effect on offense rates of school proximity residential restrictions. Level Three Sex Offenders Residential Placement Issues, 2003 Report to the Legislature, Minnesota Department of Corrections
 18. Since blanket proximity restrictions on residential locations of level three offenders do not enhance community safety, the current offender-by-offender restrictions should be retained. Proximity restrictions, based on circumstances on an individual offender, serve as a valuable supervision tool...Most of these supervision proximity restrictions address the issue of the offender associating or interacting with children or minors, rather than where the offender resides. Level Three Sex Offenders Residential Placement Issues, 2003 Report to the Legislature, Minnesota Department of Corrections
 19. A significant number of offenders have married or have been reunited with their victims; and, in those cases, the residency restriction is imposed on the victims as well as the offenders. Iowa County Attorneys Association...
 20. A tight web of supervision, treatment and surveillance may be more important in maintaining community safety than where a sex offender resides. Report on Safety Issues Raised by Living Arrangements for and Location of Sex Offenders in the Community; Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal justice, Sex Offender Management Board