

# Becoming a Welcoming Church: Safe Sanctuaries & Protocols

*Presented by*

The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ): Prison and Jail Ministries

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National  
**Benevolent**  
Association  
CALLED TOGETHER | CALLED TO CARE

# We Have a Problem!

There are myths and misconceptions about people convicted of sex offenses in the United States.

Fear and alienation have been the result.

Yet, once completing their sentences, those convicted of sex offenses return to our communities.





Let's Shatter Some Myths...



**Myth:**

**"Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers."**

Let's Shatter Some Myths...



**Myth:**

**"The majority of sexual offenders are caught, convicted, and in prison."**

Let's Shatter Some Myths...



**Myth:**  
**"Most sex offenders  
reoffend."**

Let's Shatter Some Myths...



**Myth:**

**"Sexual offense rates are higher than ever and continue to climb."**

Let's Shatter Some Myths...



**Myth:**  
"All sex offenders  
are male."

# Let's Shatter Some Myths...



**Myth:**

**"Children who are sexually assaulted will sexually assault others when they grow up."**

# What Constitutes a Sex Offense?

**Sex offender**: a person who has been convicted of certain sex offense crimes.<sup>1</sup>

**Examples:**



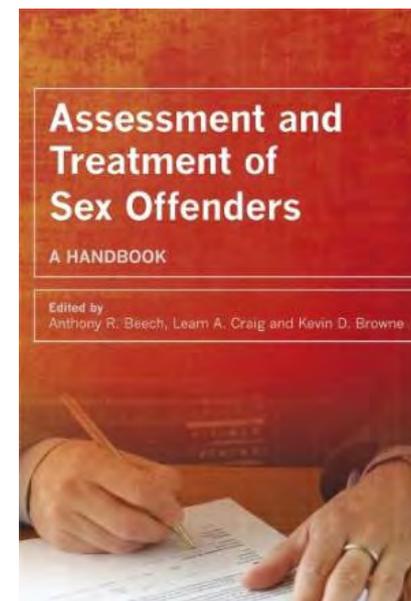
Sexual conduct with a minor	Sexual assault; including of a spouse
Indecent exposure	Kidnapping, assault, murder, unlawful imprisonment, and burglary (when the offense includes evidence of sexual motivation)
Failure to register as a sex offender	Can be misdemeanors or felonies

<sup>1</sup> <http://criminal.findlaw.com/criminal-charges/sex-offenders-and-sex-offenses-overview.html>

# What Are the Punishments and Treatment?

- The most effective treatment approach involves helping offenders change unhealthy thinking patterns, understand factors that are linked to their offending, and develop effective coping skills.<sup>1</sup>
- States have varying mandatory treatment/counseling requirements before release.
- In KY, offender must admit guilt or responsibility to be accepted into Sex Offender Treatment Program—this causes issues with appeals.

<sup>1</sup> Berlin, F. S. (2000). *The etiology and treatment of sexual offending*. In D. H. Fishbein (Ed.), *The science, treatment, and prevention of antisocial behaviors: Application to the criminal justice system* (pp. 21.1-21.15). Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.



# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?

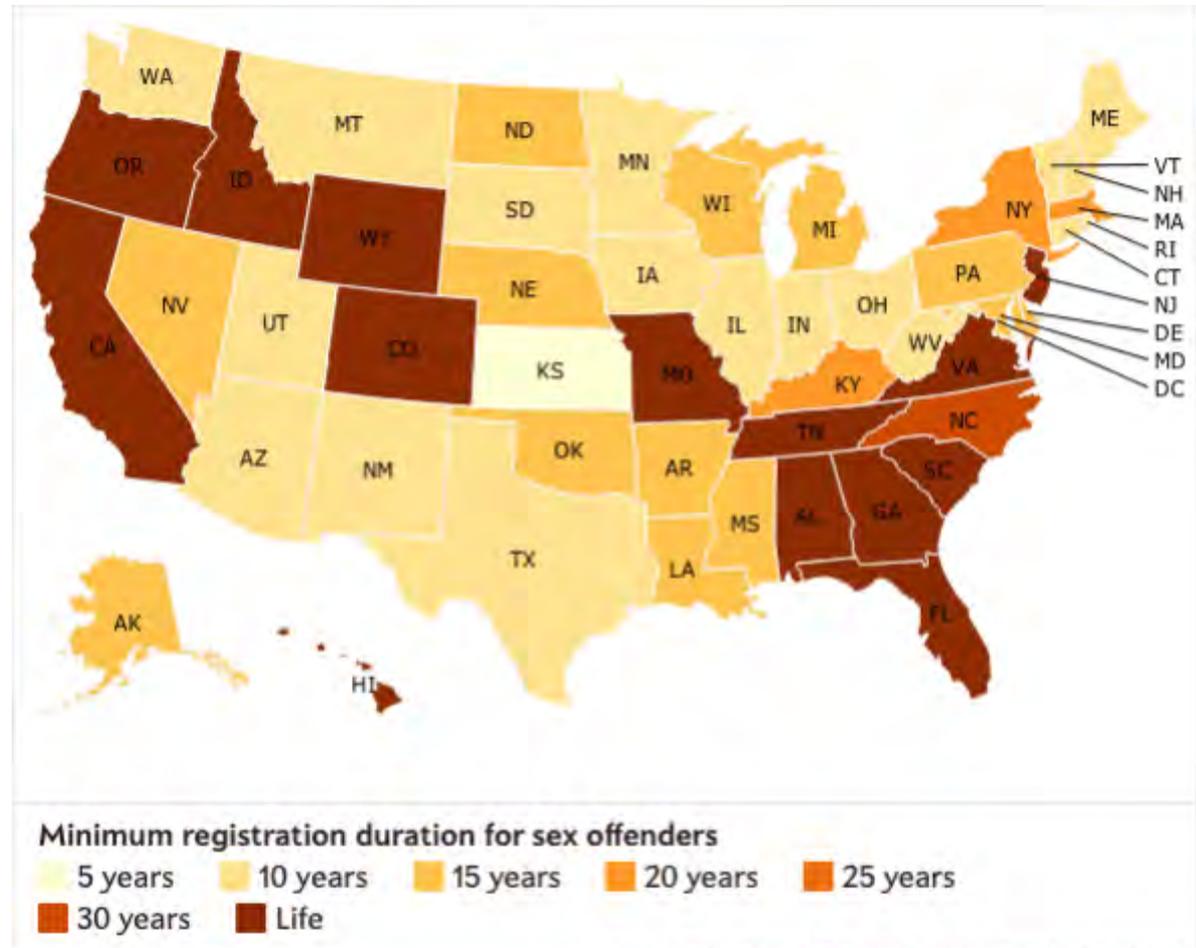


Registrant: a person, male or female, who has been convicted of a sexual offense where the federal or state law requires them to be placed on the sexual offender registry after they have served their criminal sentences or when they have been released on parole.

*Fact: Sex offenses represent under 1% of all arrests.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (2005). iv. *Crime in the United States, 2004: Uniform crime reports*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



Source: Washington College of Law at American University

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- **When re-entering the community, sex offenders may face many challenges that can cause their lives to be unstable, including:**
  - **Negative public feelings, being ostracized, or becoming victims of hostile acts;**
  - **Restrictions on where they can live**
  - **Difficulties finding a job**

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



Most states have laws that restrict where sex offenders may live—whether or not their crimes involve children.

*e.g. living within 1,000 to 2,000 feet (500 feet in some states) of places where children gather (schools, daycare, parks, playgrounds, churches, gyms, swimming pools, libraries, and school bus stops).*

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- In KY, it's the registrant's duty to ascertain whether his/her residency is within 1,000 feet of a restricted area, and if a new facility opens, the registrant *shall be presumed to know* and, within 90 days, shall move.

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- Some states and jurisdictions also limit or forbid sex offenders from passing through child safety zones, which means they also cannot travel on certain roads or bus routes.

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- *No research has shown that these restrictions lead to a decrease in sexual reoffending.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Hanson & Morton-Bourgon (2005).

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- To the contrary, professionals are concerned that laws that banish or restrict housing options for offenders may eliminate the stability and support that offenders need to be successful in the community.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Levenson & Cotter (2005a) and (2005b).

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- Without stable employment, offenders are at a higher risk of reoffending.
- Finding suitable employment is a challenge when re-entering the community.

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



- Sex offenders' options are limited because of concerns about access to potential victims, employers' reluctance to hire, licensing restrictions (e.g., daycare workers and security guards), and residency restrictions.

# What Are the Restrictions upon Sex Offenders Once Back in the Community?



*Instability can put offenders at greater risk to re-offend; therefore, working with offenders to deal with these challenges is crucial to their ability to live crime-free lives.*

# What Would Jesus Do?

- **Levitical Law:** The leper must wear torn clothes, cover his mouth, and cry "Unclean" in the presence of others. The leper must be quarantined "outside the camp."
- **Jesus' Healing of the Man with Leprosy, or "The Leper"**
- **Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16**



# Moved with Pity...



"If you choose, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean." [A]nd he was made clean.

Mark 1:40-42

# How Can the Body of Christ Respond to the Crisis Today?

One pastor's story:

Rev. Brian Gerard, Senior Minister

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Louisville, Kentucky

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0Xe5OpHOJcATHJnSUhkMkFCWjg/view?usp=sharing>



# Developing a Safe Sanctuary Protocol

- Educate the congregation of the need for a safe sanctuary policy
- Communicate with parents of children about the importance of a policy
- Check out online resources; tailor the policy to your congregation
- Once adopted, stick with it!
- Meet personally and privately with the returning citizen or convicted sex offender
- Learn what restrictions apply as conditions for release
- Provide a mentor or mentors for known returning citizens convicted of sex offenses

# Valuable Resources



*Fact Sheet: What You Need to Know About Sex Offenders,* from The Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM): [www.csom.org](http://www.csom.org). The fact sheet can be found at [www.csom.org/pubs/needtoknow\\_fs.pdf](http://www.csom.org/pubs/needtoknow_fs.pdf).

Melton, Joy. *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth.* (Discipleship Resources: Nashville): [www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org).

# Time for Questions



# More Resources

The United Methodist Church has many good resources. One church in Texas streamlined its training so volunteers could do it online: "The Safe Sanctuaries Computer Training Material for Acton UMC."

<http://safesanctuaries.actonyouth.com>

The South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church offers model safe sanctuary policies for small, medium, and large churches.

<http://www.umcsc.org/home/resources/safe-santuararies/local-churches-safe-sanctuary-policy/>

Safety 101 for Congregations: Disciples Home Missions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

<http://www.docfamiliesandchildren.org/safety-101>

# Becoming a Welcoming Church: Safe Sanctuaries & Protocols

*Thank you!*

*[www.nbacares.org/prison-and-jail](http://www.nbacares.org/prison-and-jail)*



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