



Considerations and Recommended Practices for Victim & Community Safety

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION | SELECTING A LOCATION



SORNA TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

SORNA refers to the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, which provides a comprehensive set of standards for sex offender registration and notification. SORNA aims to close gaps and loopholes and generally strengthen the nationwide network of sex offender registration and notification programs.

The SMART Office provides support and technical assistance to jurisdictions implementing SORNA, and to public and private organizations. The SMART Office also supports the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) to provide training and technical assistance. Support can be provided in a variety of ways to best serve the needs of the community. Typical methods of assistance may be via conference call, email exchange, webinar, onsite mentoring, peer-to-peer support, as well as onsite support with customized training and community outreach events. There is typically little or no cost to the community for training and technical assistance services provided through this SORNA tribal training/technical assistance program.

If your tribal jurisdiction is interested in receiving assistance, contact NCJTC at (888) 370-1752 or cjgrants@fvtc.edu. An online request form is available at www.ncjtc.org/SORNA.

BACKGROUND

Tribes opting to implement the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) must ensure that sex offenders are aware of their obligation to register and know where to report for registration. Given the diversity and complexity of criminal justice systems in Indian Country, and the many different agencies involved, deciding on a physical location where sex offenders must report to register is not always straightforward. Not all tribes have the benefit of a dedicated, stand-alone police department facility, registry office or other buildings that provide services to offenders (e.g., probation offices). In many instances, multiple services are located in a single, centrally located tribal facility, such as a community center or health services center. These facilities may also offer services to victims and vulnerable populations who run the risk of coming into contact with offenders. Circumstances such as these must be considered by tribal authorities when setting up registration units on their lands.

This document provides guidance to tribes on where an offender should report for registration, taking into consideration victim safety, availability of resources, logistics and law enforcement needs.

VICTIM & COMMUNITY SAFETY

When deciding where offenders will report to register, tribes should consider a location where contact between a sex offender and sexual assault victims/survivors (in particular the victim of the offender's sex assault), non-criminal justice/law enforcement employees, some of whom may also have sexual victimization histories, and the general public, particularly children, will be minimized.

In order to minimize contact, tribes should consider any potential contact between sex offenders and populations in multi-use tribal service facilities (e.g., victim services, medical and mental health, social services, daycare, recreation center, etc.), or facilities with common areas and waiting rooms. If there are common areas that a sex offender might use to register or access other tribal services, sex offenders may come into contact with the general public while waiting to go through the registration process.

OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

In order to better protect the community and victims, certain precautions are necessary when sex offenders pose particular risks. If registration is not routinely taking place in a police facility or by a police officer, it is essential that registry officials collaborate with the police so that they are aware of the registration process taking place in their jurisdiction and are available to assist with registration of offenders who have:

- Serious or violent criminal offenses;
- A lack of stability in employment, housing, or social relationships;
- Substance abuse issues; or
- A history of non-compliance with supervisory rules.



Picking a location for registration can be extremely challenging, but by brainstorming possibilities and employing some basic practices, community and victim safety can be enhanced.

RECOMMENDED LOCATIONS FOR SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION

Taking victim and community safety into account, tribes should consider using the following locations for sex offender registration purposes:

- A standalone police department facility.
Several tribes register sex offenders in stand-alone police department facilities with no access to tribal and other community members and limited incidental interaction with non-sworn, civilian law enforcement employees.
 - A standalone criminal justice/public safety facility that best meets the criteria for minimal tribal community member and non-law enforcement staff contact.
A number of tribes utilize tribal criminal justice/public safety facilities other than a police department, such as a courthouse, prosecutor's office, corrections facility, or fire department. However, interaction with other tribal members, including tribal members with victimization history and their children, and non-law enforcement employees, can occur in these locations.
 - If the tribe does not have any criminal justice/public safety oriented facilities, consider using a tribal administration building that has limited public access, and inform other staff that registration will be taking place in the facility.
Some tribes use a tribal administration facility where no direct tribal services are provided, but interaction with other non-law enforcement staff, including individuals with a victimization history, can occur.
- If the only option available is the use of a multi-use tribal services facility, consider how to enhance safety by avoiding contact between offenders and the general population through such mechanisms as separate entrances, not utilizing common areas/waiting rooms, and restrictions on offender access are in place.
One tribe uses a mixed-use tribal building where the police department and other tribal services are provided, but has a separate police entrance for the registered sex offenders to limit contact with other people utilizing other services.
 - If there is no way to minimize contact between sex offenders and other members of the community, tribes can also consider developing mobile registration units to register sex offenders in the offender's residence or other specified community location.
Several tribes register sexual offenders in the tribal community through use of a mobile registration unit that can go to the offender's residence. This provides the added advantage of simultaneously verifying the offender's address.
 - Tribes can also consider sending their offenders to register with another jurisdiction.
Some tribes have agreements with other registration jurisdictions (e.g., other tribes, state or local registration jurisdictions) to register sex offenders.

As a final consideration, regardless of the location where registration is taking place, tribes should make every effort to schedule sex offender reporting, including scheduling after-hours appointments. Several tribal registry entities use scheduled appointments to limit potential contact between offenders and other tribal members and non-law enforcement employees. Sex offenders should be given appointments at times when general waiting areas are not being used by non-offenders for other services. If this is not possible, sex offenders should be advised to come to the registry office only at their appointed time, and not to congregate or socialize with people in general waiting areas, and should be provided a contact telephone number in case they are early or delayed.

Picking a location for registration can be extremely challenging, but by brainstorming possibilities and employing some basic practices, community and victim safety can be enhanced. For more information, please refer to the SORNA training and technical assistance (front side).

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