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SORNA Webinar

How to Conduct Community Notification Meetings on
Registered Sex Offenders

Live transcript/captions available at <https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=SMART>

Indian Country SORNA Training and Technical Assistance Program

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SMART

Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring,
Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking



Today's Panelists

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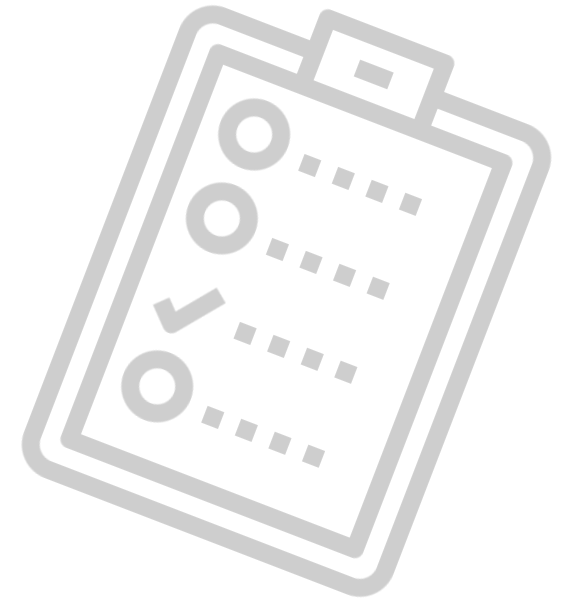
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Agenda

- **Community notification**
 - Overview
 - Sex offender registry public websites
 - How to conduct a community meeting
- **Panel discussion of best practices**
- **Question and answer**



Community Notification

What Is Community Notification?

- Process of sharing sex offender information with the community
- Each community notification is an opportunity to educate the public about a specific offender and your registration system and sex offenders in general
- Notifications include—
 - Website alerts
 - Business notifications
 - Child-serving agency notifications
 - Written materials and website information
 - Community meetings



Sex Offender Registry Public Websites

- Each state, SORNA tribe, principal territory and the District of Columbia has a public sex offender registry website.
- National Sex Offender Public Website, NSOPW.gov
 - The only U.S. government website that links public state, territorial and tribal sex offender registries in one national search site.
 - Provides the information each jurisdiction posts publicly on its website.



National Sex Offender Public Website

The screenshot shows the top section of the website. On the left is the Department of Justice logo and the text 'THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE'. On the right is the 'SMART' logo with the subtitle 'Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking'. Below this is the name 'DRU SJODIN' and the main title 'NATIONAL SEX OFFENDER PUBLIC WEBSITE'. A teal navigation bar contains links for 'HOME', 'SEARCH', 'SAFETY AND EDUCATION', 'ABOUT NSOPW', 'FAQS', and 'ABOUT DRU'. To the right of the navigation bar are links for 'ESPAÑOL', Twitter, and Facebook. The main content area is divided into three sections: 'SEARCH NSOPW' with a description and an 'Advanced Search' button; 'SEARCH BY NAME' with input fields for 'First Name *' and 'Last Name *' and a 'Name Search' button; and 'SEARCH BY LOCATION' with input fields for 'Address *', 'City/Town *', a state dropdown menu (currently showing 'Alabama'), and a distance dropdown menu (currently showing '1 Mile'), with a 'Location Search' button.

Sex Offender Registry Public Websites

- The information posted on each jurisdiction's site is governed by its sex offender registration laws.
- SORNA also has requirements regarding what information can and should be posted.
- Some jurisdictions post more or less information than others.
- Common variations (all acceptable under SORNA):
 - Not posting tier offenders
 - Not posting juvenile offenders
 - Posting additional types of offenders on the site

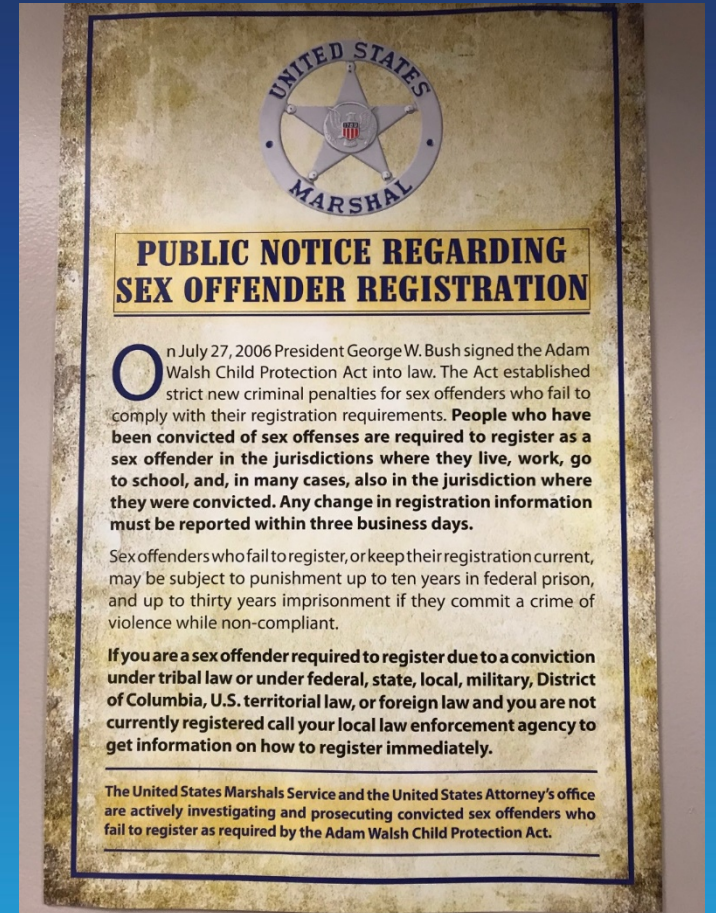


How Community Notification Works



- Convicted sex offenders are required to immediately notify registration officials about where they live, work and go to school.
- Registration officials take the information received and post it to the jurisdiction's public registry website.
- Next, an email notification is sent to subscribers in the location where the offender will live, work or go to school, which includes identifying information about the offender.
- Communities in some jurisdictions can request in-person meetings to deliver notifications.

Community Notification Meetings



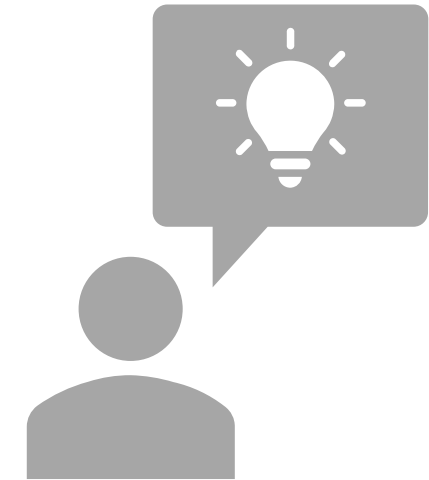
Community Notification Meetings: Purpose

- Provide information to the community about specific registered sex offenders and sex offending generally
- Build awareness of who have been convicted of serious sex offenses and who may pose a threat to community safety
- Inform community members about ways to address concerns and report suspicious behavior
- Community notification meetings are optional for jurisdictions, but not required



Community Notification During COVID-19

- To support tribal social distancing needs, alternatives to face-to-face community meetings can be considered:
 - Use of web-based meeting platforms
 - Media presentations (e.g., radio or local access television)
 - Social media
 - Tribal public registry website and NSOPW.gov



Community Notification Meetings: Benefits

- Provide a forum to educate community members about sex offenders and sexual offending
- Provide resources for concerned community members and information on how to safeguard family members
- Notify businesses and child-serving organizations of the offenders in the community
- Assist law enforcement, probation, parole and registry staff through better tips and calls
- Create a sense of community accountability in the offender's success
- Help to dispel common sex offender myths



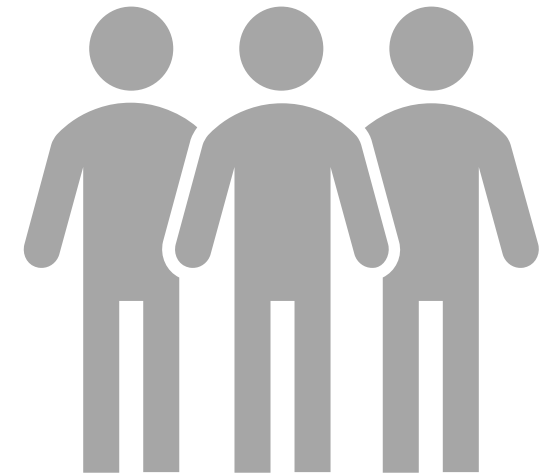
Meeting Topic: Dispelling Common Myths

- Sex offenders will never come back to the community
- All people who have committed sexual harm are on the registry
- People on the registry are there for lesser offenses
- Every sex offender is a threat
- Registration will completely prevent a sex offender from reoffending
- Nothing can prevent a sex offender from reoffending



Considerations for Community Notification on Juveniles

- Tribal policy for registering and notifying on juveniles
- Provide resources on registered juveniles
- Encourage tribal community support for juvenile reintegration



Community Notification Meetings: How to Conduct Them?

Meeting Planning Logistics: Location, Date & Time

- Secure an adequate facility for your audience size: school auditorium, community hall, church, etc.
- Set meeting time: 7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday is best
- Verify facility will be set up in advance: chairs, head table, audio-visual equipment, handout table(s)
- Verify presenters will be able to attend and ready to present
- For tribes where community meetings are not currently allowed, determine if there are technological alternatives



Meeting Planning Logistics: Advertise



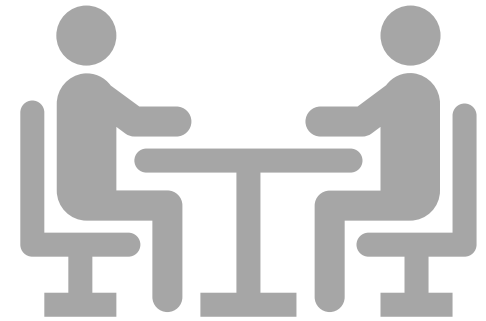
- Community newspaper
- Local radio
- Social media
- Attend other tribal community events
- Meeting notice sent home from school
- PTA/parent newsletters

Meeting Planning Logistics: Other Considerations

- Prepare sufficient handouts: too many is better than not enough (or provide an emailed version for online meetings)
- Have child care available
- Index cards for questions
- Sound system
- Onsite counselor and making referrals
- Others?

Meeting Implementation: Multidisciplinary Team

- Identify multidisciplinary team members
- Have a planning session
- Foster equal participation during the meeting
 - Law enforcement gives introductions, discusses safety issues and facilitates questions at end
 - Prosecutor covers “general” legal issues
 - Therapist covers recidivism and general sex offender behavioral issues
 - Department of Corrections covers supervision
 - Social worker/victim advocate covers victimization issues



Meeting Implementation: Best Practice Tips

- Make sure all participants know what each participant is going to talk about and how much time they have to speak
 - Should be discussed and practiced beforehand
 - When possible, have the same participants for each meeting
- Avoid contradicting each other in front of the community
- Seat panel in front of audience
- Use PowerPoint to present information



Meeting To-Do List

- Arrive one hour early (or sign in early for online meetings)
- Verify room arrangement and audio-visual equipment; if virtual, ensure technology platform is working
- Display photo montage (poster or PowerPoint)
- Start the meeting on time



The Meeting Blueprint



- Introductions, including presenters' qualifications
- History of law: tribal, state, federal
- Discuss who is a sex offender and what offenses require registration
- Extent of sex offender population
- Need for stability
- Discuss offender's conditions of supervision
- Discuss offender's circumstances (criminal history, treatment received, rehabilitation experiences, living situation, etc.)
- Discuss residence restrictions, if relevant
- Discuss what citizens can do to protect themselves
- Resources
- Questions

Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion: Best Practices

- How has your community reacted to community notification?
- Do you prefer offender specific or offender general notification?
- What has worked well for you?
- What are some lessons learned?
- How have registrants and victims/survivors reacted to community notification?
- What is your tribe's policy on notification about juvenile offenders?



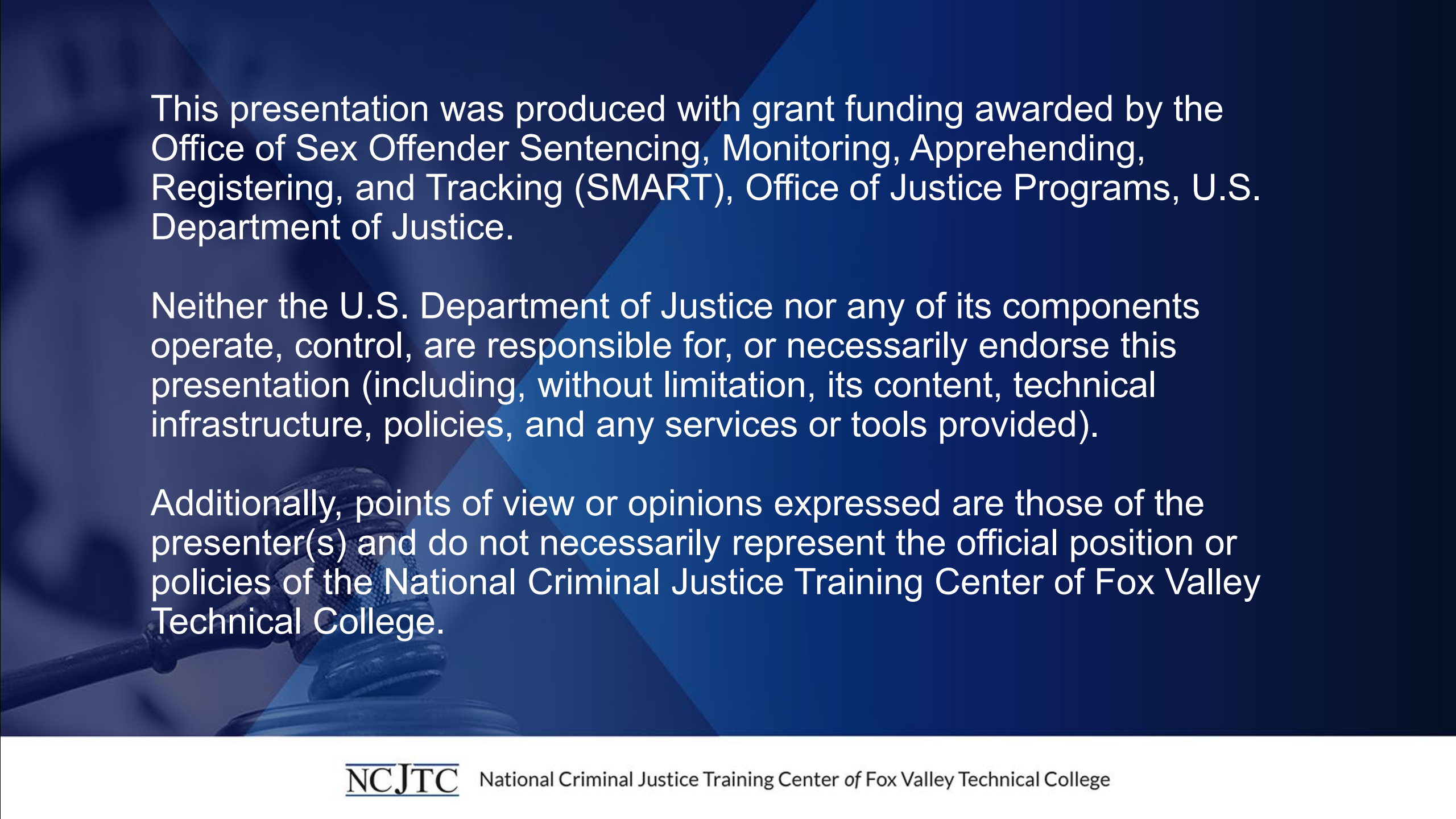
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