



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**SEX OFFENDER POLICY BOARD**  
**PO Box 40927 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0927**  
**(360) 407-1050**

October 2010

**TO:** Sex Offender Policy Board

**FROM:** Registration & Notification Sub-Committee

**RE: ON-LINE IDENTIFIERS AND SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION**

*Should Washington State require registered sex and kidnapping offenders to submit information regarding any e-mail addresses and any web sites they create or operate?*

Currently, no online identifiers such as email addresses, instant messenger names or other online addresses are required or requested of registered sex and kidnapping offenders in Washington, in an attempt to monitor potentially inappropriate online behavior.

Sexual abuse, commissioned through the use of the internet, presents a special challenge; different from other types of crimes and violence. Both nationally and internationally, enormous strides have been made to understand the problem, educate the public, and mobilize resources in the prevention of sexual violence. It is estimated that *one in seven (1/7) youth (between the ages of 10-17) will receive an unwanted sexual solicitation over the Internet. Four percent (4%) of youth have experienced an "aggressive" solicitation, where someone attempted to contact the child offline.*<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, based on current research, sex offenders, once detected, have a lower recidivism rate in general, and their crimes are committed against known victims in very high proportion. The Department of Justice found that many more new sex crimes were committed by other types of criminals (87%) than by previously identified sex offenders (13%).

The fiscal implications to implementing the reporting, collection and monitoring of online identifiers of registered sex offenders would be considerable and would impact

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<sup>1</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions" <csom.org>, n.d. Web, 24 Nov. 2009.  
On-Line Identifiers White Paper

such entities as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, the Department of Corrections and local enforcement agencies, at a minimum.

However, while there is no known connection between the collection of online identifying information and an increase to public safety, recent evidence shows that education to both parents and children on internet safety, coupled with sexual violence information and prevention education can have a positive impact on public safety.

In conclusion, while there are certainly a number of sex and kidnapping offenses that are committed using the internet, there is no current research, evidence, or best practice that indicates the collection of online identifying information increases public safety and/or has a deterrent effect on offense or re-offense.

Therefore, the Washington State Sex Offender Policy Board (SOPB) recommends that limited state resources be focused on providing internet safety and sexual violence prevention information to parents and children in lieu of collecting online identifying information from registered sex offenders. The SOPB will continue to monitor and track best practices, national trends, and information related to the collection of on-line identifying information, in an effort to continually improve Washington's sex offender management system to increase public safety while holding offenders accountable.