

Pennsylvania State Police Megan's Law Section



**2024
Annual Report**

I am pleased to present the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Megan's Law Section (MLS) Annual Report. Megan's Law was first enacted in Pennsylvania with the signing of Act 24, by Governor Tom Ridge, on October 24, 1995. Since that time, the law has been amended several times, including the signing of Act 111 by Governor Tom Corbett on December 20, 2011. Act 111 expanded the number of offenses requiring registration and implemented a tier classification system in which length of registration and frequency of verification is predicated upon the determined tier. Act 111 also brought Pennsylvania into compliance with the Federal Sexual Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA).

The Megan's Law statute was amended in 2018, when Governor Tom Wolf signed Act 10 of 2018 into law on February 21, 2018; and Act 29 of 2018 on June 23, 2018. These amendments were crafted by the legislature following a Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision that declared the prior statute unconstitutional when applied to certain offenders. Act 10 amended Subchapter H, 42 Pa.C.S. §§ 9799.10 – 9799.42, and Act 29 reenacted Subchapter H and created Subchapter I, 42 Pa.C.S. §§ 9799.51 – 9799.75. Subchapter I applies to convicted sexual offenders who committed a registerable offense on or after April 22, 1996, but before December 20, 2012.

PSP has embraced the mandate to improve the efficiency of the registration process. The Pennsylvania Sexual Offender Registration Tool (PA SORT) was developed to allow those entities tasked with performing registrations an electronic conduit for submission, replacing a largely antiquated, labor-intensive paper process. Through funding provided by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), equipment to support sexual offender registrations was made available to county probation departments and other designated registration sites statewide (including each PSP field installation apart from our Turnpike stations).

Partnering with the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) and the Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET), the PSP established a unique audit process to ensure every offender convicted of a predicate offense is appropriately registered. The PSP receives a quarterly report of convictions and compares these with actual registrations, identifying omissions which would likely have gone undetected.

PSP continues to evaluate and improve every aspect of sexual offender management unabated. In 2014, a Compliance Unit was established within the MLS, which is responsible for coordinating and conducting random compliance checks. This initiative is credited, in part, with a compliance rate that is consistently above national average.

Ensuring victims of sexual violence receive required notifications of offender status and have access to support services is, likewise, a priority for the PSP. The PSP collaborates with the Office of Victims Advocate (OVA) to facilitate the notification process – a task they are best situated to perform.

We continue to work tirelessly to fulfill our public safety mission and believe sexual offender management is a vital aspect of our strategy to do so. Thank you for your interest in this topic of importance to the citizens of the Commonwealth we so proudly serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Col. Christopher L. Paris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Colonel Christopher L. Paris
Commissioner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents statistics and information regarding the activities of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Megan's Law Section (MLS) for the calendar year 2024, in compliance with Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes (Pa.C.S.) §97. The objective of Megan's Law is to enhance public awareness and safety by making information concerning registered sex offenders accessible to the public.

The PSP MLS continues to effectively maintain and update the sex offender registry, ensuring that law enforcement and the public receive timely information. Over the past year, in collaboration with the Information Technology staff, the MLS has implemented approximately 78 updates, enhancements, and corrections to both the public website and the internal Pennsylvania Sex Offender Registry Tool (PASORT) database. These efforts have resulted in a more efficient registration and verification process, as well as improved tracking capabilities for offenders. Additional training sessions were also conducted for stations throughout Pennsylvania, thereby increasing knowledge and fostering the development of a team of subject matter experts across the state. In 2024, the MLS provided training to 18 Megan's Law Liaisons.

The Megan's Law registry currently comprises 24,137 registered offenders, categorized as follows: 4,145 Tier I, 2,833 Tier II, 4,434 Tier III, 1,135 Sexually Violent Predator offenders, 6 Sexually Violent Delinquent Children, 1,223 pre-SORNA ten-year registrants, 5,991 pre-SORNA lifetime registrants, 1,787 pre-SORNA Sexually Violent Predators, and 2,583 pre-SORNA out-of-state registrants. Depending on their classification, sex offenders are mandated to remain on the registry for durations ranging from 10 years to a lifetime. The classification also influences their required reporting frequency. The PSP MLS diligently tracks and updates offender statuses, including changes of address, tier re-evaluations, relocations, or deaths.

Monthly compliance teams conduct checks across counties throughout the state. During the reporting period, a total of 14 compliance checks were conducted in collaboration with the PSP and local law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with established standards. Forty-two offenders did not comply with the registration requirements. As a result, actions included issuing warnings and citations, as well as pursuing criminal charges as appropriate.

Public access to the Megan's Law website remains a critical component of transparency. Data related to website usage indicates that communities across Pennsylvania are actively engaging with the system to stay informed. In 2024, the website recorded a total of 3.3 million visits, with an average monthly search volume of

275,000. The most frequently searched information pertained to physical descriptions, name searches, and offenses.

The PSP remain committed to upholding public safety, enforcing compliance with Megan's Law, and ensuring transparency for communities throughout Pennsylvania. Through collaborative initiatives, innovative strategies, and rigorous enforcement, the MLS are making considerable advancements in the management of sex offenders and the enhancement of public safety.

ANNUAL OVERVIEW

Pennsylvania Megan's Law, 42 Pa.C.S. §97, requires individuals convicted of certain legislatively enumerated offenses register with the PSP. After initial registration, these individuals are required to appear at an approved registration site for periodic, scheduled updates. The individuals are required to notify PSP of any changes to their registration information that may occur between scheduled appearances. The information collected is placed into Pennsylvania's Sexual Offender Registry. The PSP, Bureau of Records and Identification, MLS, is tasked with administering the sexual offender registry. The MLS not only collects sexual offender information for inclusion in the sexual offender registry, but also disseminates certain sexual offender information to law enforcement agencies and the public. The MLS also monitors and ensures sexual offenders comply with their sexual offender registration requirements. The following report is intended to provide an overview of the sexual offender registry, information on the activities of the PSP, MLS, as it relates to the administration of Pennsylvania's Megan's Law, and statistical information regarding sexual offenders in Pennsylvania.

The Sexual Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) was signed into law by President George W. Bush on July 27, 2006. SORNA was designed to unify sexual offender registry laws across all states, expand the list of sexual offenses requiring registration, and include additional information on sexual offenders required to register. SORNA also provided a more standardized approach to sexual offender registries by individual states, making sexual offender information more readily available to law enforcement and the public.

The requirements set forth in SORNA caused the Pennsylvania General Assembly to substantially amend Pennsylvania's Megan's Law. Governor Tom Corbett brought Pennsylvania into compliance with the federal requirements when he signed Act 111 into law, which became effective on December 20, 2012. The new SORNA requirements caused a substantial increase in the number of sexual offenders registered in Pennsylvania. As a result of this increase, PSP developed a web-based sexual offender

registration application. The Pennsylvania Sexual Offender Registry Tool (PA SORT) is used by state, county, and municipal agencies across Pennsylvania to enter and update sexual offender information directly into the sexual offender registry. The implementation of PA SORT not only streamlined the registration process, but also provided a more expedient means of processing the information collected, making it available to law enforcement and the public in a much timelier manner. Cost savings were also realized, as paper registration forms were nearly eliminated.

As mentioned previously, 42 Pa.C.S., Chapter 97, Subchapter H, is applicable to an offender whose offense occurred on or after December 20, 2012. Under Subchapter H, registered sexual offenders who are not incarcerated are required to appear at a registration site at pre-determined times throughout the year. The duration of the registration requirement and the frequency of these appearances is dependent upon the Tier level/classification of the offender. Tier I offenders are required to register for 15 years, reporting annually. Tier II offenders must register for 25 years, reporting semi-annually. Tier III offenders, and those determined by the courts to be a Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) or Sexually Violent Delinquent Child (SVDC), for crimes committed as a juvenile, are required to register for life, reporting quarterly.

As mentioned previously, Subchapter I of 42. Pa.C.S., Chapter 97, is applicable to convicted sexual offenders who committed a registerable offense on or after April 22, 1996, but before December 20, 2012. At the end of the calendar year 2024, there were a total of 24,137 active registered offenders with 11,584, or approximately 48 percent, registered under the provisions of Subchapter I of 42. Pa.C.S., Chapter 97. There were 12,553 offenders, or approximately 52 percent, registered under the provisions set forth in Subchapter H, also known as the SORNA provisions. Of all the active offenders, 13,352, or approximately 55 percent, are required to register for life. Of those offenders requiring lifetime registration, 7,361, or approximately 30 percent, are required to verify their information quarterly. There are currently 377 active Transient Offenders in the registry who are required to register monthly, regardless of Tier assignment or other classification. A registered offender who is incarcerated is considered an active offender and is designated as such on the public website. Updates are only required if the offender is transferred to a different correctional facility or upon the release of the offender from custody.

The PA SORT has proven to be invaluable to the administration of Pennsylvania's Megan's Law. After sexual offender information is input, whether as an initial registration or a verification/update, the appropriate personnel within the MLS review the data. Once the information is reviewed and approved, PA SORT is updated, and the new information is automatically updated on the public website. PA SORT is configured with various

parameters that automatically generate a wide range of correspondences and alerts. This assists the MLS personnel in processing offender information and notifications in a timely manner, as well as providing near real-time monitoring for non-compliant sexual offenders.

During 2024, the MLS received 2,106 new sexual offender registrations. A Legal Assistant reviews each new registration for completeness and accuracy, determining if the sexual offender is required to register. When an offender is determined to have a registration requirement, the appropriate offender classification is designated. Classifications are determined by statute and are based on the offense date and offense committed. The offender information is then activated in PA SORT and the information authorized by statute is posted to the public website. Should a new registration be submitted for an offender, and it is determined that the individual is not required to register, correspondence is sent to them indicating same. Of the 2,106 new registrations received in 2024, MLS staff determined that 2,021 offenders were required to register, and 85 were not.

The registration verification times for an offender are based on the date the offender initially registered and the pre-determined frequency of the verifications. When the required appearance time nears, the MLS mails a reminder notification to the offender. The notification indicates the timeframe in which an offender must appear at an approved registration site to remain in compliance. The notification also provides a list of the 135 approved registration sites. Currently the registration sites are comprised of 79 PSP Stations, 50 county-level sites, and six (6) municipal police departments. Each of these registration sites has access to the PA SORT application. There were 32,735 such notifications mailed by the MLS in 2024.

In addition to these scheduled verification appearances, registered offenders are required by law to report any changes in their information to the PSP within three (3) business days. These updates typically involve the registered offender appearing at one of the approved registration sites and providing the updated information. Each time a registered offender appears for a mandated appearance or to report a change, the information is transmitted to the MLS via PA SORT. The MLS staff reviews each verification and/or update for accuracy. Once vetted, the offender's information, including any changes, is posted to the public website. The MLS staff processed 56,066 offender verifications and updates in 2024.

Any time an offender reports a change of address, whether it be residential, employment, or school, the MLS notifies the local PSP Station and/or municipal police department having jurisdiction at the location. A total of 19,149 of these notifications were

made in 2024. The MLS also notifies the affected agency when an offender reports they no longer reside at a particular address, have terminated employment, or are no longer a student within the jurisdiction. There were 18,577 such notifications made in 2024. These notifications keep authorities informed of sexual offenders who reside, work, or attend school within their respective jurisdictions.

In addition to the address change notifications mentioned previously, any time an SVP or SVDC registers or reports an address change, the MLS also prepares a community notification packet. These packets consist of an instructional letter and court documents for law enforcement reference, as well as 100 or more Community Notification Flyers. The community notification packets are then sent to the local PSP Station or municipal police department with primary jurisdiction. In 2024, the MLS sent 903 community notification packets. Upon receipt of the packet, the local PSP Station or municipal police department conducts a community notification campaign by distributing the flyers as mandated by law.

Pennsylvania Megan's Law also requires notification is made to a victim if a related SVP or SVDC registers or reports a change of address. In 2015, PSP partnered with the Pennsylvania Office of Victim Advocate (OVA) and transferred the victim notification responsibilities, as the OVA is better able to meet the needs of the victims with their resources and expertise in victim advocacy. Since 1995, the OVA has represented crime victims by protecting and advancing their rights and assisting with victim services. The OVA generated 3,824 notifications to victims concerning a change of address, employment, or school for an SVP or SVDC in 2024.

The OVA also offers victims the ability to register for related assistance. In 2024, 1,006 Megan's Law victims registered for additional services. One of these services allows victims to be notified in the event of an offender's parole processing, a change in a State Correctional Institution inmate's status, or a change in custody. In 2024, 3,840 victims were notified of these offender status changes.

In accordance with 42 Pa.C.S Chapter 97, the PSP also maintains a website available to the public. This website is separate from the PA SORT system. The public website has a vast amount of information concerning Megan's Law, including information on state and federal statutes, links to other states' registries, and certain information concerning actively registered offenders. The offender database can be searched in a variety of ways and includes a mapping tool that can identify sexual offender addresses within parameters set by the user. Users of the website have the option of creating an account, which will allow the user to receive updates regarding specific offenders. This tool provides email notifications to the user when the selected offender has a change in

registration status, or any change to a residential, employment, or school address. Users also have the option of registering their address to receive email alerts when any offender adds or terminates a residential, employment, or school address within a user-designated radius of the registered address. In 2024, there were approximately 3.3 million visitors to the public website. There were approximately 65,000 active users accounts which generated approximately 1.3 million email notifications.

Sexual offender compliance with registration requirements is essential to ensuring public safety and awareness. A high compliance rate results in the most accurate information being available to both law enforcement and the public. Pennsylvania has consistently maintained one of the highest compliance rates in the country. In 2024, Pennsylvania had a compliance rate of 96 percent versus a 92 percent national average.

The MLS also engages in proactive enforcement efforts to verify and ensure compliance by offenders. Compliance checks are routinely conducted at pre-selected locations throughout the Commonwealth. These details are coordinated and conducted by members from the MLS, along with Troop members, and municipal police officers. During these checks, the law enforcement officers proceed to the address(es) reported by the offender. While verifying that the reported information is correct, additional information reported by the offender is also verified. These compliance checks reveal offenders who are non-compliant and serve as a deterrent to offenders falling out of compliance in the future. The number of law enforcement personnel involved in these details creates a police presence in the community. In 2024, 1,934 offender addresses were checked, resulting in 41 investigations for potential compliance violations.

In addition to the details organized by the MLS, local PSP Stations and municipal police departments also periodically conduct routine compliance checks on offenders. Some of these checks are initiated because of an automated weekly report generated by the MLS. The report contains a list of non-compliant and absconded offenders and is forwarded, via email, to law enforcement agencies throughout Pennsylvania. The reports are searchable and customizable by the agency receiving them, allowing those agencies to sort the information to better meet their needs. In 2024, the MLS sent these weekly reports to 210 different entities.

In summary, Pennsylvania's Megan's Law was created to provide awareness to law enforcement and the public of sexual offenders in their community. The law delegates responsibility to the PSP to administer the Megan's Law Registry and ensure the provisions set forth in the registration statutes are upheld. The MLS endeavors to provide timely and accurate information concerning sexual offenders to both law enforcement and

the community, thus facilitating the promotion of public safety, while acting within the parameters set forth in the applicable statutes.