

AREA RESOURCE GUIDE

(Services listed are provided free of charge, or have income-based scheduling)

Homicide Support/Advocacy

Compassionate Families
354-0007, 721-3326
Life Is Valuable
908-0989
Parents of Murdered Children
262-0866, 713-9683
Victim Services Center
630-6300
Jax. Sheriff's Office Victim Advocate
630-1764

Abuse (Domestic)

24 Hour Hotline
1-800-500-1119
Hubbard House Emergency
Shelter & Counseling
354-3114
Quigley House (Clay County)
1-800-339-5017

Compensation (victim)

Victim Services
630-6300
MADD Victim Services
388-0664

Consumer Fraud

State Attorney's Office
630-4994

City of Jacksonville

Consumer Affairs Division
630-3467

Detoxification

Gateway Community Services
387-4661

Family

Family Nurturing Center of Florida
389-4244

Guardian Ad Litem Program

220 East Bay Street, 6th Floor
Jacksonville, Florida 32202
(904) 630-1200

Legal Assistance

Legal Aid
356-8371
Three Rivers Legal Services
126 W. Adams St., 7th floor
Jacksonville, FL 32204
904/394-7450

Mental Health Center of Jacksonville

333 West 20th Street
Jacksonville, FL 32254
(904) 695-9145

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

(MADD)
388-2455

Rape

Sexual Assault
Response Center
244-RAPE (244-7273)
Office: 244-4600

RAPE Recovery Team

722-3000

State Attorney's Office

630-2400

Trauma Counseling

Women's Center of Jacksonville
722-3000
City Victim Services
630-6300

Youth Crisis

Youth Crisis Center - The Safe Place
3015 Parental Home Road
Jacksonville, FL 32216
904-725-6662

The Interstate Transportation of Sex Offenders



Know Your Rights

by Atty.
Jay C.
Howell

You don't have to be Chris Hansen of *Dateline NBC* to come to the conclusion that there are a lot of losers out there who want to have an inappropriate relationship with a teenager. *Dateline's* alarming investigation has no trouble in attracting child exploiters. It kind of makes you wonder – how many are actually out there?

Well, for starters, you can look at the registered sex offenders in various parts of the United States. These are individuals whose crimes were investigated by law enforcement and whose criminal cases resulted in court convictions. They include sexual crimes committed against adults as well as children. New York has over 24,000. Texas has over 48,000. Michigan has almost 40,000.

Florida has more than 33,000 sexual offenders who are living in our state. Actually, the total nationwide is just over 600,000. Recently, Florida and almost every other state has cracked down on this public health hazard by increasing the requirements and the penalties associated with the registration of sex offenders. Typically, the offender is required to register with a local or state law enforcement agency. Data are

kept in statewide computers.

Ours is a mobile society. What happens when a convicted sex offender moves from one state to another? Is he required to register? Whose laws apply?

Our Florida courts have been wrestling with the details of this relatively new legal phenomenon. What happens when a sexual offender moves here from another state? One individual was convicted as a juvenile of a sexual offense in Minnesota. Under Minnesota law, minors convicted of sexual crimes are required to register. In Florida, they are not.

The Florida appeals court decided that, because of the requirements in his home state of Minnesota, he was also required to register here in Florida. He challenged the constitutionality of the Florida registration statute, but the court answered that the law was rationally related to the Florida legislature's intent to include Florida residents who had been designated sex offenders in another state.

What if the court in another state withholds a formal determination of guilt in a sexual crime? One individual who had pled no contest to charges of sexual assault of a child in Texas challenged whether he could be labeled a "sexual offender" in Florida because a judge withheld a formal adjudication of guilt. The Florida court reasoned that "convicted" meant a determination of guilt, regardless of whether

adjudication was withheld or imposed. Accordingly, he qualified as a "sexual offender" for the purposes of Florida's registration laws.

All of this begs the most fundamental of public policy questions. If the individuals who have previously molested children indeed constitute a public health risk to our kids, why are so many of them out of jail?

A U.S. Department of Justice study showed that 5.3 percent of the sexual offenders released from prison were re-arrested for another sex crime within three years. About one half of the study group had originally

been convicted of sexual crimes committed against children.

As most states set up elaborate registration and identification systems and we all discuss the subtleties and details of new laws, somewhere a child may be wondering – wouldn't we be better protected if these individuals were kept away from us?

Jay Howell, a Jacksonville attorney, has been a State Prosecutor, a US Senate Investigator, and the founder of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. He represents crime victims in civil claims for damages and advocates for the legal rights of all victims.

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