

Sexual Predators and Offenders:

Information and Education is Your Key to Safety



By Ken Tucker
FDLE
Regional
Director

Sexual predators and offenders are among the most loathsome felons. They can come from any walk of life, any economical background, religion or race. They can be as close as the guy down the street or the "grandfatherly" man in the community. There really is no stereotypical type. This is why information and education are our strongest defenses.

Floridians are fortunate. Florida is nationally recognized

as a leader in making important safety information regarding sexual offenders and predators available to the public. In 1997, Florida became one of the first states to make registration information available on the Internet. The purpose of Florida laws relating to sexual predators and offenders is to enhance public safety by requiring registration of sexual predators and offenders, monitoring their activities, tracking their whereabouts, and for some probationers, restricting their place of residence in proximity to schools and day care centers, and facilitating law enforcement investigation and prosecution.

As of April 30, 2002, there were 22,441 sexual offenders and 3,255 sexual predators registered with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). In addition to sexual predators and sexual offenders, the law defines a third category, sexually violent predators, sexual offenders who, through civil trial proceedings, are determined to be sexually violent predators. Sexually violent predators are likely to engage in future acts of sexual violence if they are not confined in a secure facility for long-term control, care and treatment. Since 1998, the public has been protected by keeping those sexual predators from re-entering society until they have been judged fit for release from custody. As of December 31, 2001, the state had detained or committed 383 sexually violent predators.

This year Florida lawmakers passed legislation, House Bill 841 (that focuses on our college and university communities and requires all sexual offenders and predators who enroll or work on campus register.) These campuses include community colleges, colleges

and state universities and independent postsecondary institutions. Lawmakers also tightened the registration statutes to ensure all sexual offenders who move to Florida (while on probation under another state) are required to register and mandate those offenders who transmit harmful materials to minors or who transmit child pornography must also register. This bill makes Florida's registration laws stronger and helps to ensure that critical information, an important tool to all Floridians in their ability to protect themselves and their families against sexual predators and offenders, is readily available.

To inform the public of individuals who are sex offenders and predators under current Florida law, FDLE provides an easily accessible service. A database is maintained by FDLE containing information that has been reported directly to FDLE by the Florida Department of Corrections and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. This database is viewed by logging on at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us>.

FDLE has also established a toll-free number, **1-888-357-7332**, which allows the public to request

**See the
Sex Predators Section
on pages 10 & 11**

information about sexual predators and sex offenders living in their communities and around the state.

Information about current sexual predators and sex offenders is an important tool for personal, family and community safety. Equally important is education.

Sexual predators prey on the innocence of children. They feed on the thrill of violating trust. They befriend the child, play with them and get to know them. Sexual predators are good at manipulation. They pay attention to the child, make them feel special and then have the child where they want them. Many cases of child molestation do not happen right away. There is a period of courtship that occurs to lower the inhibitions of the child.

A case was reported where a male between the ages of 10

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