

Coronavirus Disease (COVID)-19 Virus Response Plan for Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators

The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) at the Wakulla County Sheriff's Office (SO) has developed a COVID-19 Virus Response Plan for Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators. It is designed to ensure legislative mandates are met, while simultaneously endeavoring to protect the health of the approximate 116 registered Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators who reside in Wakulla County, the health of the Wakulla County SO personnel responsible for Offender Management, and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to the general population.

Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators are a crime threat because of their propensity to re-offend. As a result, federal and state law mandate certain requirements on these types of offenders and upon various governmental entities charged with managing them. [NOTE: According to a report published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics entitled, Recidivism of Sex Offenders Released from State Prison: A 9-Year Follow-Up (2005-14) (NCJ 251773), "state prisoners released after serving time for rape or sexual assault were more than three times as likely as other released prisoners to be re-arrested for rape or sexual assault during the nine-year period following their release."] At the Wakulla County SO, the CID is responsible for management of the registered Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators who reside in Wakulla County, Florida.

Pursuant to Florida Statute (F.S.) 943.0435(14)(a), Sexual Offenders are required to register at the Sheriff's Office twice per year (the month of their birth and six months thereafter) and at any time registration information changed such as their name, address, registered vehicles, vessels, or online activity. Pursuant to F.S. 775.21(8)(a), Sexual Predators are required to register at the Sheriff's Office quarterly (during the month of their birth and every third month thereafter). Pursuant to F.S. 943.0435 (6), the Sheriff's Office is required to conduct address verifications of registered Sexual Offenders at least once per year. Pursuant to F.S. 775.21(8), the Sheriff's Office is required to conduct address verifications of registered Sexual Predators at least quarterly. Pursuant to F.S. 775.21(7)(a), the Sheriff's Office is required to make notification to the community and the public of the presence of Sexual Predators, by notifying each licensed child care facility, elementary school, middle school, and high school within a one-mile radius of the temporary or permanent address of a Sexual Predator, of their presence. Pursuant to F.S. 775.21, F.S. 775.261, and F.S. 943.0435, Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators, and Career Offenders are required to visit a driver license office to update their address, have a new photograph taken, and obtain a Florida driver license or identification card.

The COVID-19 Virus Response Plan for Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators is designed to limit in-person interactions to the extent possible, while ensuring legislatively mandated requirements continue to be met or exceeded in cooperation with other governmental entities which perform other legislatively mandated roles associated with Offender Management. In Wakulla County, Florida, violations of the registration laws by registered Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators will continue to be vigorously enforced by Detectives of the CID.

Highlights of the COVID-19 Virus Response Plan for Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators are delineated below.

Original Registration and Periodic Re-registrations

Pursuant to F.S. 943.0435(14)(a), Sexual Offenders are required to register at the Sheriff's Office twice per year (the month of their birth and six months thereafter) and at any time registration information changed such as their name, address, registered vehicles, vessels, or online activity. Pursuant to F.S. 775.21(8)(a), Sexual Predators are required to register at the Sheriff's Office

quarterly (during the month of their birth and every third month thereafter). These registration obligations continue unchanged during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CID will continue to accept walk-in registrations at the CID Office in the Wakulla County SO Annex Building, located at 16 Oak Street Crawfordville, Florida; however, the in-person registration process has been amended to limit person-to-person contact.

Offenders updating registration information will provide the required documentation to CID personnel through the glass partition in the front lobby of the Wakulla County SO Annex Building. Utilizing that documentation, CID personnel will electronically update the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) database, print items for signature, and the offenders will sign the documents while remaining in the lobby. The only offenders to pass into the restricted area of the CID office space will be those required to be fingerprinted, and only then by a CID employee equipped with a facemask, gloves, and any other personal protection equipment deemed appropriate.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wakulla County SO has contacted with Offender Watch® to offer “Offender Watch® Express Check-In” to registered Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators, and Career Offenders as a means to minimize the time spent by offenders in the Wakulla County SO Annex Building. With Offender Watch® Express Check-In, offenders may go online to review their information, and make any additions, corrections, or deletions required.

TO UPDATE A RECORD ONLINE

1. Login to www.offenderwatchexpress.com with your name, birthday, and last four digits of your social security number as it exists in the database.
2. Step through to verify identity, physical features, addresses, phones, vehicles, etc.
3. **Include a current telephone and email address** in case there is a need to contact.

After receiving the offender’s entry, the CID will review the online input before saving it as a part of the offender’s file.

Address Verifications

Pursuant to F.S. 943.0435 (6), the Sheriff’s Office is required to conduct address verifications of registered Sexual Offenders at least once per year. Pursuant to F.S. 775.21(8), the Sheriff’s Office is required to conduct address verifications of registered Sexual Predators at least quarterly.

Since September 2018, the CID has increased the frequency with which address verifications are conducted. The CID established a calendar system within Offender Watch® to ensure address verifications of registered Sexual Offenders were conducted, at a minimum, every six months rather than annually as required; and of registered Sexual Predators every two months rather than quarterly as required. The calendar is provided to a Deputy Sheriff of the Civil/Warrant Division, who physically conducts the address verifications. Additional unannounced address verifications are also conducted periodically by Detectives of the CID. In so doing, unannounced address verifications of registered Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators and Career Offenders are conducted more than twice as often as required.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CID will continue to maintain this enhanced pace of unannounced address verifications because of the propensity of these offenders to re-offend; however, the Deputy Sheriff conducting the address verifications will be equipped with a facemask, gloves, and any other personal protection equipment deemed appropriate.

Community Notification

Pursuant to F.S. 775.21(7)(a), the Sheriff's Office is required to make notification to the community and the public of the presence of Sexual Predators, by notifying each licensed child care facility, elementary school, middle school, and high school within a one-mile radius of the temporary or permanent address of a Sexual Predator, of their presence. Since May 2018, the Wakulla County SO has accomplished this via Offender Watch®.

Once annually, and each additional time a registered Sexual Predator makes an address change, the CID has Offender Watch® mail a postal mailer to every neighbor within a one-mile radius of the temporary or permanent address of each Sexual Predator to notify them of the presence of the Sexual Predator. Additionally, special recipients (such as schools and daycare facilities) are notified via electronic mail (email) of the presence of all registered Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators in Wakulla County each time they change their address. Each postal mailer and email has a photograph of the offender, lists their address, articulates the sexual-related crime for which they were convicted, and provides the age of their victim(s).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CID will continue making notification to the community and the public of the presence of registered Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators via this methodology.

Making Address Changes on Driver Licenses

Pursuant to F.S. 775.21, F.S. 775.261, and F.S. 943.0435, Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators, and Career Offenders are required to visit a driver license office to update their address, have a new photograph taken, and obtain a Florida driver license or identification card.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most state and/or tax collector driver license offices in Florida are closed to the public and are assisting customers remotely via telephone or email in an effort to protect their workforce and to help mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus Disease.

During the public closure, Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators, and Career Offenders are unable to comply with F.S. 775.21, F.S. 775.261, and F.S. 943.0435, regarding the Florida driver license or identification card.

To assist these registrants, the Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV) has developed a [Florida Registrant Address Update Request](#) form. The form allows Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators, and Career Offenders to mail their address changes to FLHSMV for processing. When a paper address update form is submitted; FLHSMV will update the registrant's record with the new address information, generate a letter confirming the registrant reported the address change (FDLE letter), and mail the FDLE letter to the registrant. FLHSMV will provide the FDLE with the updated address details electronically.

When a Sexual Offender, Sexual Predator, or Career Offender updates their address with the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC) or Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the DOC and DJJ will provide the registrant's name, driver license number and new address to FLHSMV. FLHSMV will mail the registrant the Florida Registrant Address Update Request form for the offender to complete and return to process the address change.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CID will provide any new registrant in Wakulla County with the Florida Registrant Address Update Request form, who will then be required to complete

and mail the form to FLHSMV for processing of the address change. [NOTE: Registrants who are able to use a computer can also obtain the Florida Registrant Address Update Request form from FLHSMV's website. This form can be downloaded at <https://www.flhsmv.gov/resources/forms/> or [Florida Registrant Address Update Request](#)

Questions

The CID has also created a postal flyer which has been mailed to all registered Sexual Offenders, Sexual Predators, and Career Offenders in Wakulla County, informing them of the Wakulla County SO COVID-19 Virus Response Plan for Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators. This will ensure all offenders are properly informed and compliant.

If any registered Sexual Offender, Sexual Predator, or Career Offender has any questions regarding these procedures, they may contact the Wakulla County SO at (850) 745-7100 and ask for Detective Sergeant Brett Surace or Criminal Analyst Michelle Newman.