



## Newsletter December 2019

# SCAM ALERT

### **Failed policy, no privacy and real danger**

In today's day and age of technology, people are finding more creative ways to make money. The internet, access to advanced software, and the lack of privacy increases those opportunities, and when traditional, legitimate means to generate money fail, some will turn to a more sinister way to increase their income. It's common knowledge that there is a new type of criminal out there, the intelligent, tech savvy, computer code whisperer looking for any way to exploit security software and obtain access to sensitive personal data. Identity theft, data breaches, robo calls, scam callers, they're all a part of the new reality of the times we live in, and there's no end to the lengths they're willing to go.

For one class of people, these threats go much further, beyond what most must fear, those that have been convicted of a sexual offense and find themselves on a public registry. In this era of online security threats and tech-enabled criminal activity, one's personal information has become of such value that the need to safeguard it has become an industry. However, the opposite can be said for those on a public registry. Their personal information has become a target, more exploitable than any other US citizen's. It's public, free, and a ready-made trove for the criminally minded extortionist looking to make money off the backs of those already marginalized and struggling. This information has no online protection or firewall

safeguards. In fact, even though the public registry does little to protect the public, more information is being added without regard to the negative effects it may have.

Registered citizens already have much on their plates, and now there is a wave of scam calls with criminals impersonating law enforcement officers. These people demand money over the phone or face arrest. These fear tactics have become widespread, spanning many states and have real law enforcement officials baffled. Their own registration offices have seen their phone numbers spoofed, used by scam callers while imitating officers from their department. Law enforcement Facebook pages are being trolled to know who to impersonate. All information online about a registrant and where they register is being used in full detail in order to make these calls believable.

Now there's a new threat. It comes in the form of a printed and mailed extortion letter. The sender threatens an information campaign against a registrant if they do not pay hundreds of dollars each month. They claim they will make everyone possible, within the community they live and anyone their family associates with, aware of the crimes that placed them on the registry. They hide behind technology; demanding payment by bitcoin to protect their identity. These self-proclaimed extortionists, like the scam callers, utilize the public registry to track and determine every victim.

All these criminals are utilizing different forms of technology to seek, research, hide, or demand payment. Some have even been so bold as to knock on the door of a registrant's home to extort money. These threats are possible because registries are

public, the same registries that have been found to be ineffective. This doesn't just affect the registrant. The family including innocent children are within the crosshairs of these targeted crimes. Payments made to the extortionist will cause financial hardship. If not, their children face ridicule and bullying in school, and their spouses experience discrimination. It is a lose-lose scenario for a registrant's family but win-win for an extortionist. They either make money or ruin lives out of hate. Besides threats of vandalism and murder, now extortion will follow them no matter where they live, work, or go to school. These are all constant concerns for someone on the registry because their privacy isn't protected like everyone else's. It's blatantly exploited at the hands of criminals committing acts of hate for personal gain.

Registrants already must navigate through an array of laws and restrictions for the sake of policy that has failed, a registration scheme that has become nothing more than further punishment, banishment, and a scarlet letter of shame. Now they face being targeted more and more, without the same protections awarded other citizens. When did it become socially acceptable that anyone in our country has less right to safeguard their families from personal, physical, and financial attack? When will the privacy of ALL effectively become more important than the failed experiment of sexual offense-based registries? When these lists become more productive as a target for ridicule, hate, harm, and extortion, their failed purpose does not justify their proven punishment. The targets placed on entire families are not an unintended consequence, they are the only result.

Ben



### **From the Director's desk**

Hello. This is an exciting time in our organization. Winds of reform are blowing across the state. Police departments are recognizing the Starkey decision on retroactivity as well as the overarching nature of the residency

restrictions. Our organization is growing, and things are happening.

In other states, courts are saying more and more, "You can't do that." "The registry is punitive." "That law can't be made retroactive." "Registrants have rights." Legislators on the other hand, who are motivated by the desire to be re-elected, are moving in the opposite direction. They have discovered that creating new restrictions for registrants is popular and ensures their longevity in office. Mandatory castration, onerous residency requirements, and removing children from homes are becoming the latest themes. In Oklahoma, things are no different. Every year bills come out of our legislature that impose new restrictions, close "loopholes" based on premises that made no sense in the first place, and just make life tougher for our registered citizens and their families.

OKRSOL is committed to tracking these bills and doing everything we can to keep them from becoming law or, at the very least, mitigating their damage. We are working with key legislators and other reform-minded individuals to re-examine some of these laws. On December 17<sup>th</sup>, we are hosting a conference call with Rebecca, OKRSOL's founder and first executive director, on how to work with legislators. This call will be open to all our membership who want to participate and will be made available for audio playback for members who can't make it.

If you haven't become a member of our organization yet, consider joining today. You will be kept up to date with the latest activities which could affect you, and if you would like to get further involved, you can work with an organization that is making a difference. We ask all members for an annual donation. Every dollar helps us maintain our efforts and reach our goals. It can be any amount you wish to contribute, but if nothing can be afforded, it is not a requirement. We look forward to you adding your voice to ours. We grow louder every month.

Go to [www.ok-rsol.org/Join](http://www.ok-rsol.org/Join) or call us at 405-294-4299 and join this important fight.

Andy

## **OKRSOL participates in interim study on the registry**

Several of our members attended an interim study on the registry hosted by Rep. Ross Ford and including members of police department registration offices, the Sex and Violent Offender Registration Unit of the Department of Corrections, attorneys, and others. Nearly everyone present felt that the 2,000-foot residency restriction should be reduced to 1,000 feet or eliminated. None of the speakers (other than our own) expressed empathy for registrants but talked in terms of manageability. We should make these arguments our focus as well. Andy and Kelsey

## **Oklahoma City residency restriction change**

In September we received multiple emails from registered citizens stating that when they reported to the Sex Offender Registration Unit in Oklahoma City, they were told that the residency restrictions did not apply to them. They could live anywhere within the Oklahoma City limits. This news seemed too good to be true. What changed since the last time these registrants reported? In a phone call with SORU staff, I asked this exact question.

According to the SORU staff, the requirements did not change. The difference is in the interpretation and application of the Starkey v. Oklahoma Department of Corrections decision. For those who are not familiar with the case, please let me summarize:

James Starkey, Sr. was a registered citizen whose registration period was retroactively increased by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. He filed a motion alleging he should never have been required to register under the Oklahoma Sex Offenders Act (SORA) because his sentencing was prior to the date the new law went into effect. The trial court determined that the Act was not meant to be applied retroactively and granted summary judgment in favor of Starkey. The Oklahoma Supreme Court upheld this decision.

What does this mean to our registered citizens? **If you were convicted prior to November 2003, you are not subject to the additions to SORA that have been added nearly every year since.**

Unfortunately, not all municipalities adhere to this decision. Most law enforcement and district attorneys believe SORA to be only administrative and therefore not bound by this decision. The city attorney of Oklahoma City does not agree. According to the staff at SORU, the decision to adhere to the Starkey decision was handed down through the chain of command in the Oklahoma City Police Department. When asked how the Oklahoma County District Attorney's office would handle any cases concerning a violation of the residency restriction, I was advised that the DA's office is aware of the OCPD policy and would not prosecute. Most likely, the case would never cross the DA's desk since OCPD would not be arresting anyone for a violation of this restriction. The DA will prosecute anyone who does not adhere to the restrictions outside of the Oklahoma City limits.

In summary, if your conviction was prior to November 1, 2003, AND you live within the limits of Oklahoma City, you are not required to live 2000 feet from a school, park, playground, etc. Hopefully, other municipalities in Oklahoma will follow the example of Oklahoma City. If you have any question as to your requirement to follow the residency restrictions, you can call the Sex Offender Registration Unit at 405-297-1197.  
Raye



## **My story**

I did everything I was supposed to. I got good grades. I helped my friends and family. I didn't get into trouble. I went to college, married a hard-working man and started a family. My mistake was believing my mother when she said depression ran in our family, and I was destined to need antidepressants and trusting a doctor who prescribed them (Paxil) to me for stress.

For the first few years, all they did was make me emotionally numb, which I thought meant they were working. But about five years into taking

them the personality changes started to really show. I became very aggressive, angry, selfish, loud, manipulative, had symptoms of mania, and what people would generally call “crazy”.

I was a high school teacher and thought students were my best friends. I did what I wanted to whenever I wanted to with no regard for anyone else’s wants, needs, opinions, or feelings. I started having trouble sleeping so my doctor prescribed Ambien, which only made my behavior worse. Most of the time things didn’t even seem real, like I was living in a dream. When I was angry, which was often, I would cause scenes and throw things. If someone confronted me, I screamed in their faces. I had to be right about everything and could never be convinced I was wrong. I stalked people and couldn’t understand why everyone didn’t want to be my friend.

A student finally decided that I had to be stopped, so he said the one thing guaranteed to get a teacher fired or make them quit, saying that we’d had sex. I was arrested six weeks after I resigned without ever being questioned by the police. I was honest with my lawyers about my behavior and my prescription drug issues, but they didn’t want to mention it to anyone, even though I (and the people who really know me) knew my behavior while on Paxil and Ambien was not the real me.

My lawyers told me I had a 50/50 chance of going to prison and should take the plea deal. I was in withdrawal at the time and wasn’t sure I could even take the stand to defend myself. They told me I would probably just have to do mail-in probation and might not even have to register as a sex offender. That wasn’t true. When I got to the courthouse, the paperwork was already completed, and my lawyer told me if I didn’t sign that day there wouldn’t be another plea offer, and I would probably go to prison, so I signed.

I was arrested in October of 2006 and started tapering off Paxil in January of 2007 (after months of research on tapering and withdrawal). I found an online forum of people who also had horrific experiences from SSRI antidepressants who helped me navigate the tapering process and withdrawal

symptoms. I became free of Paxil on August 25, 2007, a day I call my rebirthday. I had withdrawal for about two years after and my behavior and personality slowly returned to the real me.

In my research I also discovered several other cases like mine, female teachers taking antidepressants that completely changed their personalities and were accused of inappropriate relationships with students. In fact, in most cases the accused teacher was on psychotropic medications. There is also an ever-growing compilation of research linking uncharacteristic criminal behavior to psychotropic medication use in general. Every lawyer I’ve spoken to confirmed they’ve had cases where it was a factor.

The FDA approval process for all medications requires only an 8-week drug trial that’s provided by the drug company itself. Most side effects are reported after the drug is approved by consumers taking the medication. Over the years these reports have resulted in drug companies being forced to acknowledge behavior changes in their advertisements and prescribing information.

I know what happened to me is hard to believe, and if I hadn’t lived it, I probably wouldn’t believe it either. That’s why I’m sharing my story because we all need to bring awareness to prevention and causation so we can stop stories like ours from happening. If I can in some small way stop situations like mine, then telling my story is worth it.

Regina

### **Do you have a story to tell?**

Contact us at [www.ok-rsol.org/contact](http://www.ok-rsol.org/contact) or call 405-294-4299 and tell us about it.



We know how difficult this season can be but want you to know that you are not alone. From our OKRSOL families to yours, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a New Year full of new joys. We stand with you, by you, and for you and hope each day it gets just a little easier for all of us. That's what we strive for, year after year.

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