

MEGAN'S LAW 20 YEARS LATER: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION AND NOTIFICATION

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The 1990s saw societal interest in the management of sex offenders in the community increase as the media reported sensationalized cases of child abductions and sexual abuse. The most notable policy to emerge out of this period was Megan's Law, which required publicly accessible sex offender registries and community notification practices. Since the policy's enactment, questions have been raised about how successful Megan's Law is in reducing sexual victimization. In the current study, a systematic review of 20 years of research on Megan's Law is presented. Twenty-two peer-reviewed articles were identified that address the issue of the effectiveness of Megan's Law in the following three ways: Megan's Law and sex crime rates, Megan's Law and sexual recidivism, and failure to register as a sex offender and recidivism. Analyses of the identified literature reveal that over 20 years, there has been little evidence that Megan's Law has been an effective policy.