

# No Baby in this Bathwater: Youth Registration is a Failed Policy

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# What Kind of Kid Commits a Sexual Offense?

1. Traumatized children reacting to their own abuse
2. Persistently delinquent teens
3. Otherwise normal adolescents acting experimentally but irresponsible
4. Generally aggressive and violent youth
5. Immature and impulsive youth
6. Adolescents engaging in normative but illegal consenting sex
7. Youth indifferent to others who selfishly take what they want
8. Youth imitating what they see in the media
9. Youth misinterpreting what they believed was mutual interest
10. Youth ignorant of the law or potential consequences of their acts
11. Youth imitating what is normal in their own family/ecologies
12. Youth attracted to the thrill of rule violation
13. Socially isolated youth who turn to younger children as substitutes for age mates
14. Seriously mentally ill youth
15. Youth responding to peer pressure
16. Youth preoccupied with sex
17. Youth under the influence of drugs or alcohol
18. Youth swept away by sexual arousal of the moment
19. Youth with incipient sexual deviance problems

# Program of Research on Effects of Juvenile Registration and Notification Policies

## Funders

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Institute of Justice
- National Science Foundation
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Open Society Foundation

## Collaborators

- Kevin Armstrong
- Dipankar Bandyopadhyay
- Michael Caldwell
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- Andy Harris
- Geoff Kahn
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- Reshmi Nair
- Jeff Sandler
- Ryan Shields
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- Donna Vandiver
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# No Baby in the Bathwater: Juvenile Registration is a Failed Policy

The available research finds:

1. No specific deterrence of sexual recidivism
2. No general deterrence of first-time sex crimes
3. Unintended effects on juvenile case processing
4. Severely harmful consequences on children



# Registration does not Deter Sexual Recidivism

1. SC: Matched sample of 111 registered and 111 nonregistered boys. Recidivism unaffected by registration status; **< 2% recidivism over 4.5-y follow-up.**
2. SC: Survival analysis of 1,275 boys; 2.5% reoffended across a 9-year follow-up. Recidivism unaffected by registration status; **<3% recidivism over 9-year follow-up.**
3. WI: Survival analysis of 172 registered and nonregistered boys; recidivism unaffected by registration status; 12% recidivism over 4-year follow-up.



# Registration does not Deter Initial Sex Crimes

1. Idaho, SC, UT, VA: Time-series analyses of tens of thousands of juvenile sex crime reports; likelihood of reports unaffected by policy implementation.
2. SC: Time-series analysis of 3,148 juvenile sex crime charges between 1991 – 2004; likelihood of charges unaffected by policy implementation.
3. MD & OR: Time-series analyses of 26,000 juvenile sex crime charges and adjudications between 1991 – 2013; likelihood of charges and of adjudications unaffected by policy implementation.

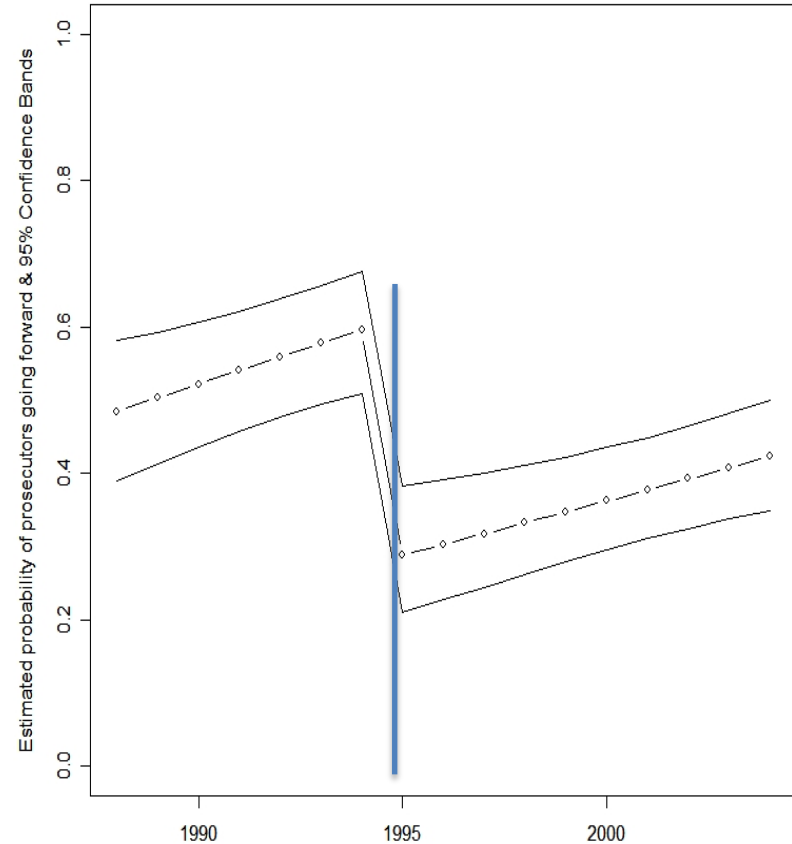


# Registration has Unintended Effects on Case Processing

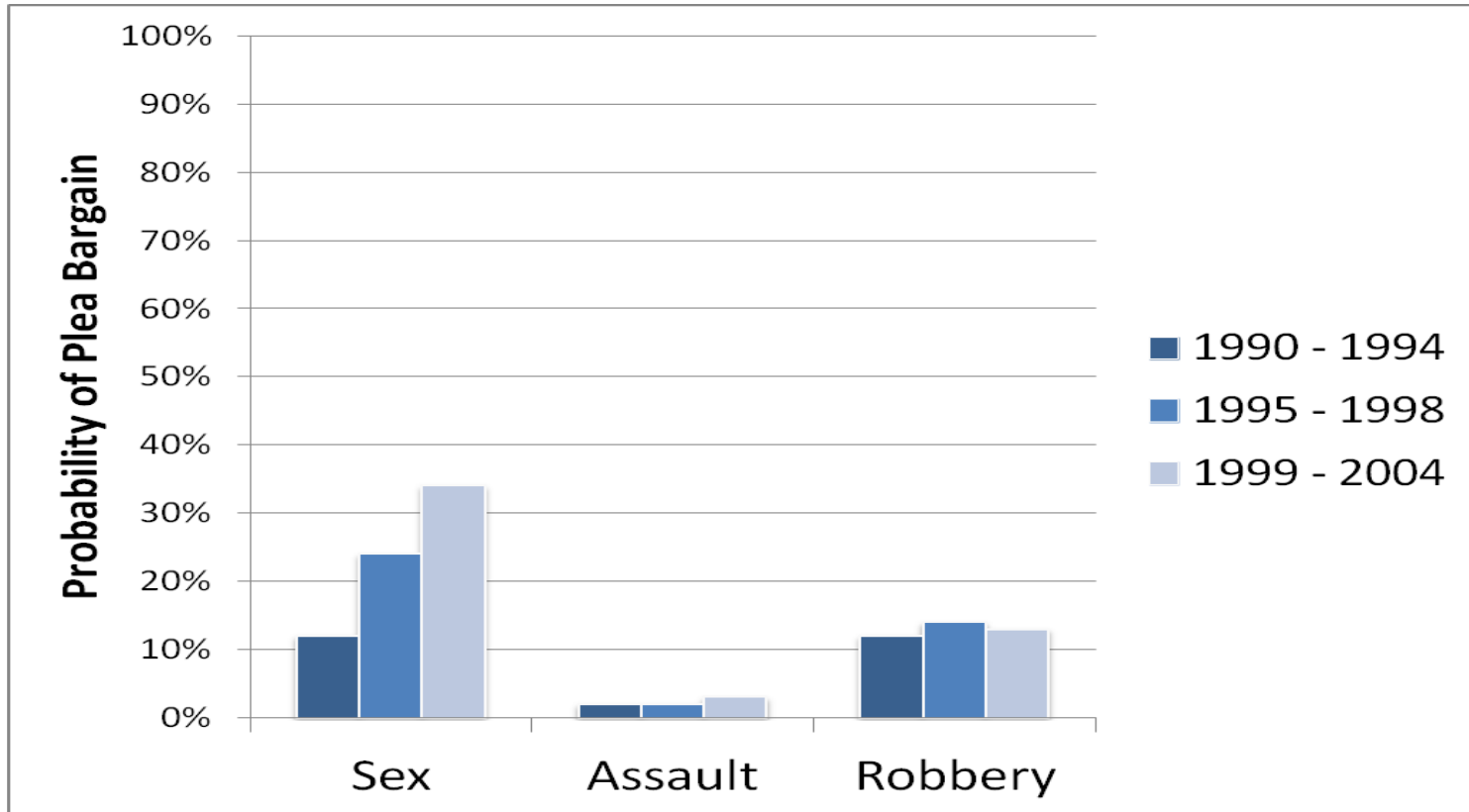
Examined all violent juvenile cases '91 – '04

- 5,503 sex charges
- 14,095 assault charges
- 2,942 robbery charges

41% reduction in the odds of prosecuting juvenile sex crime cases following implementation



# Registration has Unintended Effects on Case Processing





# Harmful Policy Effects: Practitioner Survey

## Practitioner Profile

265 practitioners surveyed

- Mean age = 52.6 yrs
- 59% men
- 92% White
- 32% doctoral degree
- 32% solo practice
- 47 states represented

## Their Client Profile

Serving 2,884 child clients

- 48% < 16 years of age
- 86% boys
- 78% one or more sexual offense adjudications
- 30% one or more nonsexual offense adjudications



# Harmful Policy Effects: Practitioner Survey

<b>Mental Health (12 items)</b>	<b>% Agree</b>
Are more afraid for their own safety	89
Have less hope for the future	89
<b>Harassment/Unfair Treatment (4 items)</b>	
Are treated differently by teachers or other adults at school	84
<b>School Problems (6 items)</b>	
Are more likely to have had to switch schools	77
Have more trouble concentrating at school	73
<b>Living Instability (4 items)</b>	
Are more likely to have changed caregivers	65
<b>Risk of Reoffending (2 items)</b>	
At greater risk to commit a future sex offense	37



# Harmful Policy Effects: Child Survey

256 youth ages 12-17 in treatment for problem sexual behaviors

- Mean age = 15 years
- 98% boys
- 55% White, 27% African American, 18% Latino
- 86% heterosexual
- 97% attending school
- 18 states represented



# Harmful Policy Effects: Child Survey

- 74 children (29%) subjected to registration and/or notification requirements
- Registered children were, on average, older, reported more victims, reported more sex offense charges, and were more likely to be white.
- Analyses controlled for these differences



# Harmful Policy Effects: Child Survey

Measure	Registered (%)	Nonreg (%)	p value	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Suicide attempted in past 30 days	6.8%	1.7%	0.050	3.61 (0.78,16.60)
Sexual victimization in past year	13.7%	8.0%	0.171	1.95 (0.76,4.99)
Approached by an adult for sex in past year	8.6%	1.7%	0.019	5.06 (1.06,24.04)



# Summary

## Juvenile registration policies

- fail to reduce sexual recidivism
- fail to prevent first-time sex crimes
- exert unintended effects on juvenile case processing
- confer substantial risk of harm to child mental health, safety, living stability and schooling
- are associated with increased suicide attempts, suicidal thinking, sexual assault victimization, peer relationship problems, and reduced sense of safety
- Opportunity cost: every dollar that supports this failed policy cannot go to effective practice



# What *Can* We Do to Prevent and Address Youth Problem Sexual Behavior?

## **Proven or Promising Prevention Strategies**

- Shifting Boundaries
- Safe Dates
- Responsible Behavior with Younger Children

## **Proven Treatment Strategies**

- Multisystemic Therapy for Problem Sexual Behavior
- Problematic Sexual Behavior - Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy



# Organizations Opposed to Juvenile Registration

**American Bar Association**

**American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children**

**American Psychological Association**

**Annie E. Casey Foundation**

**Association of Prosecuting Attorneys**

**Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers**

**California Sex Offender Management Board**

**Council of State Governments**

**Federal Advisory Commission on Juvenile Justice**

**Human Rights Watch**

**Juvenile Law Center**

**National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers**

**National Juvenile Justice Network**

**R Street Institute**

**Stop It Now!**





# The Right Time for Change

Every dollar spent on juvenile registration is wasted.

Instead, states can focus on programs that work.

Programs that prevent abusive behavior from occurring in the first place and programs that effectively reduce its recurrence.



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