

STATE AUDITOR DOUG HOFFER

PRESS RELEASE

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State Auditor Releases Second Sex Offender Registry Audit

Vermont State Auditor Doug Hoffer today released the findings of an audit of the State's Sex Offender Registry (SOR). This performance audit is the second of its kind, following a 2010 investigation of the registry that revealed numerous errors, control weaknesses, and questionable data reliability.

The new audit of the registry focused on two objectives: 1) assessing the extent to which the registry's data is reliable and current, and 2) determining which recommendations from the 2010 audit were implemented. Errors in the system made it impossible for the audit team to determine if the data was current. The audit team identified critical errors in 253 offender records, or 11 percent of the 2,340 records in the registry, which calls into question the reliability of the SOR.

While the Courts and the Departments of Public Safety and Corrections have taken steps to implement recommendations from the 2010 audit, progress has been mixed. An important recommendation from the 2010 audit was not fully implemented – tracking the treatment status of sex offenders who are no longer under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. As a result, the State is unable to know whether some offenders are following legal requirements.

One major improvement the audit team noted was the implementation of an information technology system, called OffenderWatch®. But the Auditor's Office cautioned that without the close cooperation of the Courts and the Departments of Public Safety and Corrections regarding changes in existing processes and the addition of more automation, the SOR will likely remain prone to errors.

"Improper categorization and errors in the system don't serve the public, which seeks reliable information, or offenders, who are sometimes mislabeled," Auditor Hoffer said. "The registry is meant to provide accurate information to the public and protect the rights of people in the system. Presently, the system doesn't appear to be doing this as well as it should."

The State Auditor's Office calls on the Courts and the Departments of Public Safety and Corrections to implement its 2010 recommendations in full and develop a process for tracking the treatment of sex offenders no longer under Department of Corrections' supervision. To accomplish this task, the Auditor's Office urges these three state entities to coordinate efforts by reconvening a working group to resolve the registry's remaining problems.

"The 2010 audit provided the parties with a path forward for correcting errors and improving procedures," Auditor Hoffer said. "Officials started down that path, but didn't finish the work."

[Act 58 of 2009](#) made the posting of sex offender addresses on the Internet Sex Offender Registry contingent on a favorable audit, which prompted the 2010 audit. Neither the 2010 nor 2014 audits opine about favorability. This policy decision belongs to the Legislature or the Administration.

To read the 2014 audit, [click here](#).

To read the 2010 audit, [click here](#).