

Chicago 400 + Work Group on Conviction Registries

Version 11, updated July 1, 2019

Catalog of problems with the laws and policies by the Chicago 400

After holding all-day conferences (3), Legal Talk Desks (10) and a policy meeting, we compiled all the problems of most concern to the Chicago 400. After much discussion and research, we voted as a group to make an organizing plan for change that will focus on the following issues first:

- 1 - changing/reducing/abolishing the housing banishment laws
- 2 - ending weekly registration
- 3 - reducing the time that people have to spend on the registry
- 4 - improving wait times at the police station and other conditions

LAWS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

- 1 - Registry period is extended when convicted of Failure to Register (FTR).
- 2 - Housing banishment laws get us kicked out of the homes we have and make it impossible to live anywhere else.
- 3 - The \$100 fee is unaffordable. Some people then avoid registration and get arrested.
- 4 - People pled for 10-year registration and it was suddenly turned into lifetime registration.
- 5 - Names of criminal charges change. Convictions change from misdemeanor to felony.
- 6 - We are put on registry because of a new felony having nothing to do with a sex offense.
- 7 - Can never get off lifetime registration or the horrible, unfounded label of "predator."
- 8 - The stigma of being on the public registry and subject to community notification is hard to cope with. This alone can send people into a downward spiral.
- 9 - Discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes against people with convictions. (Children bullied; property vandalized; fired from jobs; and social media slander/blackmail.)
- 10 - Lack of access to travel across the state or in other states.
- 11 - Can't use public resources for social services, voting, and health care.
- 12 - Excluded from private resources such as shelters, job training, museums, sports.

VAGUENESS OF LAWS

- 1 - The law does not say where people without fixed addresses can sleep.
- 2 - The law is not clear about whether weekly people must report any place they stay more than 3 times per year.
- 3 - The law does not say what you are reporting weekly.
- 4 - Everything is illegal so you always walk around terrified of being arrested or set up so they can arrest you for everything.
- 5 - It is not clear exactly what info people with no fixed address should report each week.

POLICE PRACTICES AND BUREAUCRACY

- 1 - Registry period is extended when not convicted of Failure to Register.
- 2 - Not told why registry period is extended. No clear way to correct information or appeal.
- 3 - If you do appeal, it takes so long to get a response.*
- 4 - Police banish you from daycares /schools that are closed and there is no way to appeal.

*We also committed to research the best way to address unfair extensions of registry time for individuals.

- 5 - Illinois State Police and Chicago Police will not give you clear information about your registration requirements. You can't get clear explanation. There are no updates.
- 6 - Police come to your house or place of work in such an intrusive way that your family doesn't want you to live there or you lose your job. They knock on neighbor's door.
- 7 - If you are not there, they arrest you.
- 8 - Police give out confusing information or no information about what to do if:
 - you get out of prison and try to register and your address is refused
 - you need to waive your registration fee because you don't have the money
 - you have any questions at all about your duty to register and when it ends
 - you want to know why your registration was extended
 - there is something they did wrong that needs to be corrected

CHICAGO POLICE STATION PRACTICES

- 1 - Some officers are very disrespectful and make it clear they dislike you.
- 2 - Shameful conditions in the bullpen—no one can come in, even parents and family.
- 3 - Overcrowded bull pen with people standing and waiting. No bathroom. No outlets.
- 4 - The hours waiting—just to get in line.
- 5 - The hours waiting—to register after you have a number.
- 6 - White numbers going first and treating us "blue numbers" as if our time is not important.
- 7 - Only one location to register.
- 8 - No clear way to legally miss registration because of illness or death in family or emergency. All people have problems and tragedies to tend to at some point.
- 9 - Not possible at CPD to get information or obtain clear records. They keep your forms.
- 10 - People have no recourse to prove that they have registered if CPD says they have not.
- 11 - Difficulty obtaining ID after you just get out of prison.
- 12 - Confusion about what your ID should say if you are homeless.
- 13 - The police threaten arrest for smoking on sidewalk but won't let people smoke where the police smoke. They make people terrified and confused.

AT THE TIME OF CONVICTION OR RELEASE

- 1 - Forced and pressured into plea deals (often for FTR) because of long jail time.
- 2 - Not told the truth about registration requirements when accepting plea deal.
- 3 - I am innocent and the public defender did not even try.
- 4 - Could not fight the conviction or failure to register because they wore me down.
- 5 - Could not fight the conviction or failure to register because it's impossible to prove.
- 6 - Was not allowed to leave prison—given an MSR violation for no housing.
- 7 - Was a youth tried as an adult.

COMMON QUESTIONS

- 1 - Why do I still have to register? It is not clear from my conviction history why I should still have to register or for how long. Seems like someone just made it up.
- 2 - When will it ever end? When will I be done with this?
- 3 - I've spent more time fighting this or in prison for FTRs than my original sentence.
- 4 - The injustice from the original case, or after punishment from the original case, just keeps growing and growing. I can't keep going anymore.