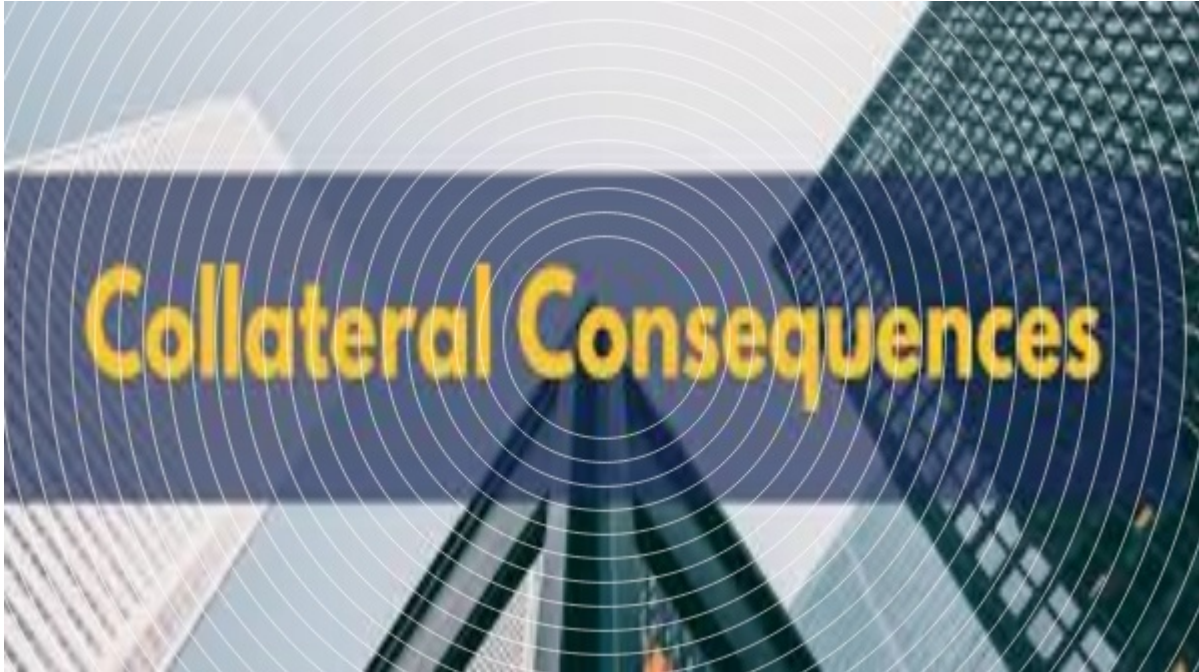


One crime; one conviction; countless injuries

written by admin | September 20, 2021



By [Kristan N. Russell and Daniel Pollack](#) . . . Committing a sex offense can ruin two lives – the victim's and the offender's. For the offender, the result can be significant incarceration time and financial penalties. In all states, persons convicted of certain crimes are required to register on a sex offender registry. The registry is viewable by the general public, thereby allowing people to view the photo and current address of the registrant, as well as information regarding the crime that was committed by the registrant. Recently, the regulations of the federal Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act were updated. In addition to the obvious baseline data, the registrant must now provide information about their professional licenses and vehicles, as well as other personal information.

Originally conceived as a tool to help protect local community residents, registration can potentially affect the registrant's employment opportunities, personal relationships, and their ability to simply live undisturbed without fear of

being harassed. However morally reprehensible a registrant be viewed, family members and partners of the offender are also affected.

Stigmatized by association

Society often extends its stigmatized views of a 'deviant' person to those who are most immediately associated with them. This is termed courtesy stigma. Those who commit sexual offenses are undoubtedly the most stigmatized of criminal offenders. So, it is unsurprising that family members and partners of registrants experience significant courtesy stigma.

Members of the public frequently assign blame to the families of those who commit sexual offenses. They feel that partners and spouses are partially to blame as they may have either known about the offense but did not report it, or they should have known that their partner was capable of committing such an offense.

Family members become unintended casualties

The experience of stigma is compounded with the harsh reality of sex offense registration. Not only have registries decisively failed to reduce reoffending or prevent sexual harm, but family members and partners of registrants have become unintended collateral damage.

Partners and spouses of sex offenders report a variety of consequences resulting from stigma and policy restrictions. Among them are:

- Social isolation and loss of their social supports
- Reduced overall well-being
- Lowered self-esteem
- Decreased mental health (e.g., higher stress, depression, and anxiety)
- Fear of losing their job or home
- Financial struggles due to their partner being unable to

obtain gainful
employment

- Fear of vigilantism and harassment

Children of registrants also suffer consequences. Mandated restrictions strip registrants' children from partaking in normal parent-child bonding activities. Oftentimes, registrants are unable to attend their children's birthday parties, sports games, and school events. Further, the registration status can affect the children's ability to have friends over to their home and can even restrict them from having access to internet or mobile devices. The public nature of registration also makes it easier for the children's peers to learn of their parent's status and can lead to bullying.

[Read the remainder of the piece here at the New York Law Journal.](#)