

INFORMATION SYSTEMS AUDIT
Sexual or Violent Offender Registry
Department of Justice

JUNE 2011

11DP-08

REPORT SUMMARY

The Sexual or Violent Offender Registry (SVOR) system plays a key role in the tracking and management of sexual and violent offenders in Montana. Given its important role in public safety and informing law enforcement and the public on the whereabouts of offenders, data integrity is critical. We determined nearly 26 percent of the total registered active offender addresses are not verified and not flagged in the system.

Context

The registry is the primary database which houses all offender registration information in Montana. As of April 2011 there were nearly 5,000 registered sexual or violent offenders in the registry. The registry is used by the public to identify the location of registered offenders and by law enforcement for queries of criminal history and offender information. There were over 120,000 public searches and 100,000 law enforcement queries during November 2010.

Results

Overall, SVOR has controls in place in the areas we tested. However, we identified areas where controls over the SVOR system can be strengthened including: user access, change management, and data integrity.

The Department of Administration hosts two components of the SVOR system. DOA users have excessive access to SVOR systems. The Department of Justice (DOJ) was not aware of DOA access to offender photographs, the website program code, or the website database. Additionally, they did not participate in, or review, determination of DOA user access.

We reviewed change management documentation for evidence the department's change management processes were being followed. Our review of these records identified weaknesses in the documentation process including: lack of management approval, no indication of user acceptance testing, and inconsistent indication of reasons for changes. Lack of an effective change management process can lead to unauthorized changes to the system or the inability to quickly identify and correct programming errors.

According to §46-23-507, MCA, offenders who fail to register, verify registration, or keep registration current are subject to potential incarceration, a fine, or both. However, offenders who fail to submit their annual verification letter within 15 days are not automatically flagged in SVOR in such a way that makes their overdue status available to law enforcement or the public. We determined nearly 26 percent of the total registered active offender population are

overdue and not flagged. As a result, when members of the public access the website or law enforcement queries data, they will not be aware of the offender's failure to verify their registration.

Recommendation Concurrence	
Concur	5
Partially Concur	0
Do Not Concur	0
Source: Agency audit response included in final report.	

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