

Megan's Law Searches

[On behalf of Dornish Law Offices, PC](#) | Jun 1, 2008 | [All](#), [Landlord-Tenant](#), [Real Estate Practice](#)

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If you were a woman, or a family with young children looking to buy, rent-to-own, or rent a new place to live, would you want to know if a pedophile or serial rapist lived next door or down the block? Might that affect the value or marketability of the property, as long as the sex offender still lived there?

This month's online tip is to search the areas where you are considering buying a flip, a rent-to-own, or a rental, under the readily available Megan's Law database, and to weigh that information in your buying decisions. I also advise searching prospective tenants by name in the same database, to protect you if you are showing a vacant unit, your other tenants, the community in which the property is located and yourself from potential problems down the road.

But before you go search crazy, I don't recommend searching the buyers of your flips, unless you are holding some form of financing. I don't recommend that you search the neighborhoods where you currently own property before you rent it or sell it. In these cases, what you don't know won't hurt you. If you do find out, you may have a moral or ethical issue whether to disclose the information to your prospective buyers or renters. This is not yet a forced legal disclosure like lead paint or information about unsafe conditions of the property, but it could become that in the future. This is much more complicated than lead paint, however, because a sex offender can move in or out of the neighborhood at any time.

The actual search has recently been made much easier in PA. Previously, a search revealed only the zip code of the offender's residence address. You had to search property records to get residence addresses for owners, and call local police departments to get addresses for renters. Now, the actual street address of the sex offender is right on the website

at www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us.

Once on the site, you have to agree not to use the information to harass or disturb the offender, and only for your own or community protection and safety. After you agree to these terms, you can search by name, for when you are searching prospective tenants, contractors or employees. You can also search by municipality or zip code, for when you are considering buying property in the area.

The information available includes the picture of the offender, residence address, general location of employment, crimes the offender was convicted of, and even the make, model and license plate of the offender's vehicle. This month, we will have a live, online demonstration of a Megan's Law search at the monthly meeting. It won't take long, so be on time if you don't want to miss the demonstration! And if you are buying or renting right now, don't wait. There are around 800 registered sex offenders in Allegheny County right now!

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