



Milwaukee leaders angry about sex offender rotation through homes

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MILWAUKEE -

Milwaukee officials are demanding action after WISN 12 News exposed a secret state program that rotates dangerous sex offenders through homes in neighborhoods near schools and families.

The officials said it puts the public at risk, and they want the governor to put a stop to it.

VIDEO: Milwaukee lawmakers want state to stop sex offender shuffle

Jonathan Tate is mad. He's lived in the Harambee neighborhood 46 years and had no idea he was living in the dark.

"Nobody ever came over and told you they were moving sex offenders in and out?" WISN 12 News investigative reporter Colleen Henry asked.

"Never, never ever," Tate said.

Tate has grandchildren, lives up the block from a day care and school and unbeknownst to him, across the street from a sex offender flophouse.

"Something got to be done about this," Tate said.

Last fall, Milwaukee passed sex offender residency restrictions that left many with nowhere to live. For months, WISN 12 News investigated how the Department of Corrections manages these sex offenders and uncovered a secret state program to house some of them.

Over a period of weeks, WISN 12 News' cameras documented the DOC's secret sex offender shuffle.

State workers in state vans moved homeless offenders through a circuit of 10 homes.

Corrections workers move them from one house to the next. They pick up one offender and all his belongings, drop him at a new address, where they pick up another sex offender and take him to his new address.

They move every three days because the sex offender ordinance outlaws them staying in one house more than four days.

WISN 12 News reporter Colleen Henry met Marshall Fox on North 33rd Street on a Monday. He was heading to a different home on Wednesday.

He is on the state sex offender registry for gang raping a 13-year-old girl. Court records show while on supervision after prison he cut off his electronic monitor and took off for five months till the state put him back behind bars.

"Do the neighbors know that you're staying here?" Henry asked.

"Yeah, I would think so, yeah," Fox said.

In fact, none of the neighbors at any of the homes knew about what the state was doing.

The sex offender shuffle sparked angry reaction at Milwaukee City Hall.

"It's a waste of money. It's wrong. It's obviously an attempt to circumvent local ordinances, and we have to deal with it now," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said.

Barrett has struggled to get the state to come up with a plan to manage the growing number of sex offenders released to the city.

"I'm hoping this gets their attention once and for all," Barrett said.

"Here the city of Milwaukee is doing its best to keep its citizens safe, and then the state comes around and goes behind our back, really behind our back, and is playing a shuffling game. It's really unfortunate," Alderman Joe Dudzik said.

Dudzik wants action.

"We will meet with our legal advisers, and the rest of the Council to see if there is something we can do about it," Dudzik said.

Common Council President Michael Murphy is calling on the governor to put a stop to it.

"There will be an incident, and God forbid there is this summer, where one of these offenders commit a horrible crime and the state and the Department of Corrections could have chosen to do something, and they didn't," Murphy said.

The secretary of corrections declined to be interviewed. The governor's office has not responded.

Early Tuesday evening, the DOC gave WISN 12 News this statement: "The Department of Corrections operates within the parameters of local and state laws. As we have expressed to city of Milwaukee leadership several times in the past, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections does not create law, we simply operate within the confines of the laws passed by the legislature. If leadership in the city of Milwaukee wants to affect change, they have the ability to work cooperatively with members of the legislature to craft legislation that addresses their concerns, and the DOC stands ready to provide them with facts and information."

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