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A look at who's been caught illegally looking at, sharing people's criminal records

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By [Matt Rocheleau](#) and [Todd Wallack](#)

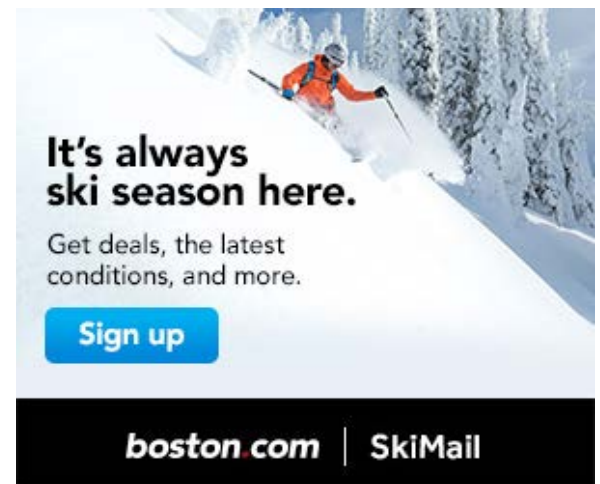
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What do a police chief, a reverend, and a lawyer all have in common? They've all been caught in recent years improperly accessing or sharing information from Massachusetts' restricted database of criminal records.

State officials said they believe such cases are uncommon. In the past five years, there were a total of seven instances in which state officials found violations of improper access or sharing of CORI information.

"While there has been occasional misuse of the Criminal Justice Information System over the years by authorized users, these instances are rare," Curtis M. Wood, the state's undersecretary for forensic science and technology, said in a statement.

State officials said most of the cases where they found people misused the state CORI system were the result of misunderstanding of the restrictions on the data, rather than an intentional violation.



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A person's CORI record potentially includes a person's complete criminal history — or “rap sheet” — including arrests, criminal charges, judicial proceedings, sentencing, incarceration, rehabilitation, and release in Massachusetts, the state explains on its [website](#).

Experts worry CORI violations aren't being caught

Just 10 people or organizations have been found to have violated the law around Criminal Offender Record Information, or CORI, in the past five years.

Access to much of the data is restricted to law enforcement agencies, licensing agencies, employers, and others with a reason to view the information. There are strict rules about under what circumstances and how the information can be accessed, stored, and shared.

According to records from the Department of Criminal Justice Information Systems, cases in recent years in which violations were found included:

- In March 2013, the state's Criminal Records Review Board, in response to a complaint, found that Auburn Police chief Andrew Sluckis improperly accessed and disseminated a job applicant's CORI, while Town Administrator Charles O'Connor improperly disseminated



the person's CORI to the assistant town manager. The board ordered all civilian town employees involved in the CORI process and police department employees attend CORI training within 60 days; and fined the town \$800.

- In June 2013, a complaint was filed with the board alleging that Rev. Marnette Saz from the United Church of Christ in Canton had improperly disseminated CORI information about a parishioner and part-time employee of the UCC. The UCC agreed to mandatory CORI training of all UCC board members and iCORI registered users. The UCC also agreed to an eight-month probationary period under which state officials would monitor and audit its iCORI account.

- In February 2014, a complaint was filed with the board alleging that Michigan Attorney Thomas Pereira had improperly accessed the CORI of an individual who was involved in litigation in Michigan in which Pereira represented the other party. Pereira told the board that neither he nor anyone from his office knew they were committing a violation of CORI law, and as soon as he learned that information may have been improperly obtained, his co-counsel took steps to remove the information from the court proceeding. The board revoked Pereira's access to iCORI, barred him from using the system in the future, and fined him \$100.

The board, created in May 2012, can impose penalties for violations including civil fines up to \$5,000 per offense and suspension or revocation of CORI access or refer cases for criminal prosecution.

In a more recent case, the Lowell Sun [reported](#) this month that two Townsend residents are suing the town and two of former police officials alleging that their CORI records were recently improperly accessed and shared, including publicly on social media.

The newspaper reported the town's police chief resigned amid an investigation into the matter by town legal counsel, while a police sergeant was fired because of his alleged role in the case.

State officials confirmed they are reviewing the matter, but declined to comment citing the pending status of the case.

State officials said that, in addition to [fielding complaints](#), there are a host of safeguards in place to try to prevent misuse and to uncover improper use when it happens.

For instance, state officials also conduct audits to ensure organizations are providing proper training and securing data.

In addition, the system can send automatic alerts to state officials if certain names — celebrities like Tom Brady, for example — were to be searched in the CORI system. Such an alert would prompt state officials to investigate to make sure the search did not violate regulations.

Still, officials said there are millions of CORI checks a year, making it possible that some violations could go unnoticed.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](#)

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