



NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES

50-State Survey: Doxing

Legal Protections for Public Health Officials: Doxing

Background

Doxing involves collecting personal information about an individual, such as their home address and personal phone number, and publishing that information on the internet. This personal information may be used by viewers to send threatening mail or other harassing messages and to stage protests in front private residences. Nationwide, state and local public health officials working to protect the public from COVID-19 are on the receiving end of threatening and harassing conduct for simply fulfilling their duty to protect the public health. One form of such conduct is doxing. In response, the Network conducted research to examine whether the states and Washington, D.C., have criminal statutes or laws that establish private rights of action to punish individuals who engage in doxing that targets public health officials. Our research is presented in this chart. Thirteen states have adopted statutes to protect members of the public and/or those in certain professional occupations from doxing. Ten states protect all persons, Minnesota only applies to law enforcement officials, and Colorado and Oklahoma apply to a specific list of government officials. For example, Colorado’s law includes protections for “public health workers” and Oklahoma’s law applies to “public health officials.” Additionally, Kentucky offers both a criminal and civil remedy, Nevada and Oregon only have a civil remedy available, and the remaining ten states have enacted only criminal sanctions. States marked with an “x” have no such doxing statute.

State	Statute	Who is covered?	What is prohibited?	Penalties
Alabama	X	X	X	X

Alaska	X	X	X	X
Arizona	A.R.S. § 13-2916	All persons	Using an electronic communication device to make available a person's identifying information to cause the person or an immediate family member of the person unwanted physical contact, injury, or harassment by a third party	Punishable by up to six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$2,500
Arkansas	X	X	X	X
California	Ann.Cal.Penal Code § 653.2	All persons	Making a person's identifying information available electronically without consent and with the intent to place the person or the person's immediate family in reasonable fear for their safety and likely to cause unwanted physical contact, injury, or harassment by a third party	Punishable by up to one year imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$1,000
Colorado	C.R.S.A. § 18-9-313	Human service workers, judges, peace officers, prosecutors, public defenders, and public health workers	Knowingly making personal information of a protected person or their immediate family available on the internet if such dissemination poses an imminent and serious threat to the person or their family's safety	Before March 1, 2022, punishable by six to eighteen months imprisonment and/or a fine of \$500-\$5,000 On or after March 1, 2022, punishable by up to 364 days imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$1,000

Connecticut	C.G.S.A. § 53a-181d	All persons	Disclosing a person's identifiable information by means of electronic communication without consent of the person, for no legitimate purpose, and with intent to harass, terrorize, or alarm, and cause fear for physical safety, the physical safety of a third person, or to suffer emotional distress	Punishable by up to one year imprisonment and/or a fine of \$2,000
District of Columbia	X	X	X	X
Delaware	X	X	X	X
Florida	F.S.A. § 836.115	All persons	Electronically publishing another person's personal identification information with the intent that the publisher or a third party will use that information to incite violence, commit a crime against the person, or threaten or harass the person	Punishable by imprisonment of up to one year and/or a fine of up to \$1,000
Georgia	X	X	X	X
Hawaii	X	X	X	X



Idaho	X	X	X	X
Illinois	X	X	X	X
Indiana	X	X	X	X
Iowa	X	X	X	X
Kansas	X	X	X	X
Kentucky	KRS § 525.085	All persons	Intentionally disseminating the personally identifying information of a person, a person's immediate family member, or household member with intent to intimidate, abuse, threaten, harass, or frighten a reasonable person	Violation is a Class A misdemeanor if no physical injury or death results, punishable by imprisonment of up to 12 months and a fine of up to \$500 . If physical injury results, violation is a Class D felony punishable by imprisonment of one to five



				<p>years; if serious physical injury results, Class C felony punishable by imprisonment of five to ten years; if death results, Class B felony punishable by imprisonment of ten to twenty years. All felonies are punishable by a fine of \$1,000 to \$10,000.</p> <p>A civil cause of action is also available for victims.</p>
Louisiana	X	X	X	X
Maine	X	X	X	X
Maryland	X	X	X	X
Massachusetts	X	X	X	X

Michigan	X	X	X	X
Minnesota	M.S.A. § 609.5151	Law enforcement officials (does not apply to public health officials)	Knowingly posting personal information about a law enforcement official or their family member if posting the information poses an imminent and serious threat to the official's safety or the safety of their family member	Misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 90 days and/or a fine of up to \$1,000 For subsequent violations and if great bodily harm or death results, violation is a gross misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 90 days and/or a fine of up to \$3,000.
Mississippi	X	X	X	X
Missouri	V.A.M.S. 565.240	All persons	Knowingly posting the name, home address, Social Security number, telephone number, or any other personally identifiable information on the internet with intent to cause great bodily harm or death or threatening to cause great bodily harm or death to the person	Punishable by imprisonment of up to 15 days and/or a fine of up to \$750
Montana	X	X	X	X



Nebraska	X	X	X	X
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. § 41	All persons	Disseminating personal identifying or sensitive information of a person with intent to cause harm to that person or to a person close to them; the dissemination of such information would place a reasonable person in fear of death or injury/cause death or injury	The victim may bring a civil action against the person disseminating the information.
New Hampshire	X	X	X	X
New Jersey	X	X	X	X
New Mexico	X	X	X	X
New York	X	X	X	X

North Carolina	X	X	X	X
North Dakota	X	X	X	X
Ohio	X	X	X	X
Oklahoma	21 Okl.St. Ann. § 1176	Peace officers and public officials (applies to public health officials)	Using an electronic communication device to knowingly publish, post, or otherwise make publicly available personally identifiable information of a covered person with intent to threaten, intimidate, or harass the person, or to facilitate another to do the same, resulting in reasonable fear of death or serious bodily injury	Punishable by imprisonment of up to six months and a fine of up to \$1,000
Oregon	O.R.S. § Ch. 300, § 1 ¹	All persons	Knowingly causing personal information to be disclosed with intent to stalk, harass, or injure a person resulting in the person being stalked, harassed, or injured by the disclosure	The victim may bring a civil action against the person disclosing the information.
Pennsylvania	X	X	X	X

¹ This law became effective on June 15, 2021 and has not yet been codified in Oregon's Revised Statutes.



Rhode Island	X	X	X	X
South Carolina	X	X	X	X
South Dakota	X	X	X	X
Tennessee	X	X	X	X
Texas	X	X	X	X
Utah	U.C.A. 1953 § 76-9-201	All persons	Electronically publishing, posting, or otherwise disclosing personal identifying information of another individual with the intent to abuse, threaten, or disrupt the other individual's electronic communication	First offense is a class B misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to six months and/or a fine of up to \$1,000 Subsequent offenses are class A misdemeanors punishable by imprisonment of up to 364 days and/or a fine of up to \$2,500 .



Vermont	X	X	X	X
Virginia	VA Code Ann. § 18.2-186.4	All persons	Publishing a person's name or photograph along with identifying information including the person's primary residence with the intent to coerce, intimidate, or harass	Punishable by imprisonment of up to one year and/or a fine of up to \$2,500
Washington	X	X	X	X
West Virginia	X	X	X	X
Wisconsin	X	X	X	X
Wyoming	X	X	X	X

Supporters



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Support for the Network provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

This document was developed by Brooke Torton, Senior Staff Attorney and Brianne Schell, Staff Attorney for the Network for Public Health Law Eastern Region. The Network for Public Health Law provides information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The legal information and assistance provided in this document does not constitute legal advice or legal representation. For legal advice, please consult specific legal counsel.

Updated: December 2021