NATIONAL CENTER FOR **MISSING & EXPLOITED** C H I L D R E N®

OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs ◆ U.S. Department of Justice

The FrontLine

Special Internet Edition 2006

Second Study of Online Youth Tracks Threats and Trends

A new national study indicates changes in the risks youth are encountering while using the Internet. ***Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later*** shows youth are increasingly exposed to sexual material and harassment, but fewer are receiving sexual solicitations compared to the previous study, *Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth*, released in 2000.

The rise in exposure to unwanted sexual material to 34% from 25% is attributed in part to the aggressive tactics used by pornography marketers and the increased capacity of computers and Internet connections to transmit images rapidly. The study attributes the decreased proportion of youth Internet users receiving sexual solicitations, only 1 in 7 in 2005 compared to 1 in 5 in 1999 and 2000, to educational messages and media stories of the dangers of online encounters. Unfortunately, the most serious sexual solicitations, those in which solicitors attempted to contact youth offline, did not decline.

"We're encouraged to find that sexual solicitations are down, though it is concerning that the more aggressive attempts to meet offline have not declined," noted Ernie Allen, President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). "Increases in harassment and exposure to sexual material are also disturbing and show that we need to adapt our prevention efforts to the changing risks to youth online."

The study authors suggest more be done to encourage reporting of offensive behavior and content found on the Internet. Few of the sexual solicitations, harassment or unwanted exposures to sexual material were reported to authorities. Youth and parents were generally unaware of places they could make reports, such as NCMEC's CyberTipline, a reporting mechanism for incidences of child sexual exploitation.

The study, released on August 9, was conducted by the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire for NCMEC. Between March and June 2005, researchers surveyed 1,500 youths aged 10 through 17 and their caretakers.

To obtain a copy, please visit www.missingkids.com or call 1-800-THE-LOST. ■

Trends in Online Victimization of Youth

Type	1999 and 2000	2005
Unwanted Exposure to Sexual Material	25%	34%
Online Harassment	6%	9%
Sexual Solicitations	19%	13%
Aggressive Sexual Solicitations	3%	4%

Social Networking Sites: The New Frontier in Child Safety

Over the past year, public attention has focused on Internet sites called "social networking sites" and the risks they present for children and teens. A 2006 Cox Communications/NCMEC study found that 61% of 13 to 17 year olds have personal profiles on sites such as MySpace, Friendster, or Xanga, and half have posted pictures of themselves online. But many children use these sites unsupervised by parents or other adults, and many post highly personal information, leaving their sites open for anyone to see. Although most companies restrict participation to individuals 13 years and older, those rules are difficult to enforce.

To confront the child safety challenges posed by these sites, in June, NCMEC hosted the Dialogue on Social Networking Web Sites in Washington, DC. Representatives from several popular sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, and Xanga attended the event, as did law-enforcement officials, policy makers, educators, and children's advocates. "Our goal is to help protect children through education, open dialogue, and elevated awareness," said

Among those attending the Dialogue on Social Networking Sites were (left to right): John Cardillo, CEO of Sentry; John Hiler, CEO of Xanga; James Dirksen, VP of Operations for RuleSpace; Chris Kelly, VP & Chief Privacy Officer of Facebook; Hemanshu Nigam, Chief Security Officer of Fox Interactive Media; and Larry Magid, Technology Journalist, Co-director of Blogsafety.com and NCMEC Board Member.

Ernie Allen, President and CEO of NCMEC.

Attendees discussed why these sites attract children and how they affect children's behavior, as well as their impact on parents, educators, law enforcement, policy makers, and the online industry. What did they learn? According to Michelle Collins, Director of NCMEC's Exploited Child Unit, the most important finding was that all parties need to do more to reduce the risks to children. In her testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives

Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet in July, Collins emphasized the value of the dialogue begun at the NCMEC event.

"We learned that social networking sites tap directly into the needs of teenagers to define themselves, explore their own creativity and reach out to their peers," said Collins. "More restrictions may cause teens to go somewhere else that has fewer restrictions, with the unintended consequence of increasing their chances of being victimized. We also heard from age verification technology experts that current tools are ineffective for children too young to appear in public records databases. Perhaps most importantly, we learned the increased importance of educational messages, and engaging teens to become a part of their own online safety."

Collins was optimistic about solutions, however. "The industry's brightest minds that created this technology in the first place can work together to solve this problem with the help of policy makers, law enforcement and children's advocacy groups," she said.

NCMEC President Ernie Allen; Adam Thierer, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Digital Media Freedom, Progress & Freedom Foundation; Attorney General Roy Cooper, North Carolina; Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, Connecticut; and Lanny J. Davis, White House Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board Member answer questions regarding the public policy challenges of social networking.

Several sites have responded to the call for increased attention to child safety. Xanga recently launched a new safety site, which is featured prominently on their main page. MySpace has begun to post banner ads from a NCMEC-Ad Council campaign warning parents and teens about adults who pose as someone else online. MySpace also contains a "safety tips" page for teens and adults, and in May, the company hired a security officer to focus specifically on child safety.

Internet service providers, too, are investigating ways that they can help make the Internet a safer environment for children. (See "Techonology Coalition to Help Fight Crimes against Children," page 5.) ■

Conference Hosts Lab to Identify Child Victims

On August 21-25, representatives from law enforcement, child protective services, and other professionals from around the world gathered in Dallas, Texas, for the Crimes Against Children Conference and the debut of the first-ever U.S.-based Victim Identification Lab.

The conference, an annual event, provides information on the latest investigative techniques and challenges associated with the many forms of crimes against children, including the sexual exploitation of children via the Internet. This year it also provided an opportunity for NCMEC to tap into the knowledge of law-enforcement professionals and prosecutors in attendance to help identify victims of child pornography.

Partnering with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) Internet Crimes Against

Children (ICAC) Task Forces, NCMEC's Child Victim Identification Program, which serves as the national clearinghouse for child pornography cases and the main point of contact to international agencies for victim identification, worked in cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service to bring the Lab to the conference.

The Lab allowed select conference attendees to contribute to the national efforts to identify victims seen in sexually abusive images. Participants viewed more than 50 "sanitized" files, both image and video, showing background identifiers, audio clues, children's faces, and suspects' faces. The Lab featured 30 individual workstations, donated by the ICAC Task Force, with real-time message posting of comments and suggestions that could be viewed by everyone in the Lab. During the week, 540 registered users visited the lab 778 times, viewed the images and posted information that generated over 560 leads.

Conference attendees view images to help identify victims of child pornography.

The Victim Identification Lab operated throughout the conference for 42 hours total. Participants included law-enforcement officials and prosecutors from 48 states and 11 countries.

All information submitted by Lab users will be compiled and analyzed by NCMEC. The information will then be distributed to the appropriate law-enforcement agencies for investigation. ■

NCMEC's Michelle Collins, Director, Exploited Child Unit, gives a tour of the first-ever, U.S.-based Victim Identification Lab to Assistant Attorney General Regina B. Schofield, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and Brad Russ of the Internet Crimes Against Children Taskforce.

Virginia Attorney General Convenes Youth Internet Safety Task Force at NCMEC

On July 14, Virginia Attorney General Robert F. McDonnell hosted the first formal meeting of his Youth Internet Safety Task Force at NCMEC Headquarters in Alexandria. Internet company representatives, law-enforcement officials, educators, parents, and elected officials make up the Task Force, which is charged with finding ways to prevent sexual offenders and other criminals from using the Internet to target children and teenagers in Virginia.

During the last session of the Virginia General Assembly, Attorney General McDonnell led a comprehensive reform of state laws regarding sexually violent predators. Now McDonnell wants to expand on that reform by identifying ways to combat predators who use the Internet. "As the Internet capital of America we must lead the way in protecting children and teenagers using this great vehicle for information, communication, and commerce," said McDonnell.

"When I was growing up, not far from where we meet today, in Fairfax County," said McDonnell, "my parents gave me common-sense advice, the kind of caution most adults received as children: Don't talk to strangers, don't get in a stranger's car. Now, in the 21st century, we have to adapt our advice to children to reflect the high-tech world in which they live."

In the coming months, the Youth Internet Safety Task Force will work to recommend a variety of strategies that it believes will help protect children from becoming victims of Internet crimes. These may include new laws and regulations; tools for law enforcement; education programs for schools, kids and parents; and business partnerships.

Michelle Collins, Director of the Exploited Child Unit for NCMEC, serves on the Task Force. "The Commonwealth of Virginia is at the forefront of states that are actively confronting the problem of child safety on the Internet," says Collins. "Without question, the Task Force's work will also help other states as they seek to prevent and prosecute Internet crimes against children." ■

Photo by Sarah Baker

Virginia Attorney General Robert F. McDonnell addresses members of the Youth Internet Safety Task Force at NCMEC.

Tools for Online Safety: Blog Beware Released by NetSmartz Workshop

In a 2006 survey, 71% of teens said they had received online messages from someone they didn't know; 45% had been asked for personal information by someone they didn't know. How teens respond in these situations can make a huge difference in their safety in using the Internet.

To help teens and their parents avoid the potential dangers of blogs, social networking and online interactions with people they first met online, the NetSmartz Workshop has created "Blog Beware." The program not only raises awareness about the risks of social networking, it provides tools to help keep children and teens safer, including tips for parents and children, a quiz that they can take together, and online support materials for teens, parents and guardians, educators, and law enforcement. You can access these tools at www.NetSmartz.org.

The NetSmartz Workshop is an interactive educational safety resource from NCMEC and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) for children ages 5 to 17, parents, guardians, educators, and law enforcement who teach children how to stay safer on the Internet. ■

Technology Coalition to Help Fight Crimes Against Children

On June 27, NCMEC and five major online companies launched a new initiative to help fight child sexual exploitation on the Internet. AOL, Yahoo!, Microsoft, EarthLink and United Online agreed to provide $1 million to fund the Technology Coalition within NCMEC. The Coalition will develop and deploy technology solutions to disrupt predators from using the Internet to exploit children or to traffic in child pornography.

"As the Internet's importance in our daily lives has grown, so has the need for tools and technologies to better protect children from predators," said Dave Baker, Vice President of Law and Public Policy at EarthLink. The Coalition's strategy is to use the industry's technical expertise to thwart those trying to use the anonymity and broad reach of the web to exploit children. As John Ryan, Chief Counsel of AOL, stated, "The proposed Coalition would employ the best minds of the Internet industry to develop deterrent strategies and technologies."

Ernie Allen, President and CEO of NCMEC agrees that online companies are a vital link in preventing and prosecuting crimes against children. "These leading companies have a wealth of expertise and technological tools. Similar tools have been used to protect users from other Internet-related threats such as spam, phishing and viruses," said Allen. "Now they can also be applied to this fight against child pornographers."

The Coalition will combine resources to:

• evaluate the specific and emerging technologies used by child predators to exploit children and conceal their activity;

• develop technologies to detect and disrupt the Internet distribution of images of child exploitation;

• establish a clearinghouse for known images of child pornography and other information that network operators can use to combat or block child pornography and;

• develop tools to help law enforcement locate and identify predators and child pornography distributors.

"This is an extremely important global issue," said Brooke Squire, Vice President and Corporate Counsel of United Online. "We look forward to working closely with our peers and with NCMEC to develop solutions to help protect the children of the world." ■

Project Safe Childhood
By Regina B. Schofield

On May 17, U.S. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales announced the launch of Project Safe Childhood, a Department of Justice initiative aimed at preventing the online exploitation and abuse of children. Project Safe Childhood is designed to help parents and citizens understand the precautions they can take to safeguard children from online predators and to support law-enforcement officers and prosecutors as they investigate child-targeted cybercrimes.

As with any public safety effort, guarding against computer-facilitated child exploitation begins with education. The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) supports several initiatives aimed at improving the public's understanding of Internet safety risks. NetSmartz, a program run by NCMEC, offers interactive resources to teach kids and teens how to stay safer on the Internet.

NCMEC President Ernie Allen speaks at the launch of the Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood. (Left to Right) Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan; Allen; FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III and Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales.

U.S. Department of Justice Photographer

Similarly, Web Wise Kids and i-Safe, two other OJP-sponsored programs, provide educational tools for both parents and children.

The other critical element of Project Safe Childhood is enforcement. Underpinning our enforcement efforts is a network of 46 intergovernmental task forces set up in regions throughout the country. These Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces, which are supported by OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, work with state and local law-enforcement agencies to develop effective responses to cyber-enticement and child pornography cases. ICAC task forces have played a critical role in stopping Internet criminal activity targeting children. In 2005 alone, ICAC investigations led to more than 1,600 arrests and more than 6,000 forensic examinations.

Through Project Safe Childhood, Attorney General Gonzales has made the safety of America's children among the highest priorities of the Department of Justice. In conjunction with valued partners like NCMEC, the Department and OJP will strive to ensure that our young people travel safely down the avenues of cyberspace.

Regina B. Schofield is the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice. ■

Financial Companies Combat Child Pornography

The Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography, launched in March, was formed to combat the alarming growth of commercial child pornography over the Internet and the use of credit cards and other payment tools used to fuel this insidious business. The Coalition companies came together at the urging of Senator Richard C. Shelby, Chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and its sister agency, the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, are managing the efforts of the Financial Coalition. Recently, Capital One and Google joined the roster of leading banks, credit card companies, third-party payments companies and Internet services companies that form the Coalition. Currently 22 companies are engaged:

America Online	Discover Financial Services LLC	North American Bancard
American Express Company	e-gold	Nova Information Systems
Authorize.Net	First Data Corporation	PayPal
Bank of America	First National Bank of Omaha	First PREMIER Bank/PREMIER Bankcard
Capital One	Google	Standard Chartered Bank
Chase	MasterCard	Visa
Citigroup	Microsoft	Wells Fargo
		Yahoo! Inc.

Working to eradicate commercial child pornography by 2008, the Coalition is building a clearinghouse that will allow companies to share information on illegal activities. NCMEC will operate the clearinghouse through its CyberTipline. The CyberTipline, which was formed in 1998 at the request of Congress to be the 9-1-1 of the Internet, is being expanded to accommodate information provided by financial companies. The new version, CyberTipline III, is currently being piloted with the help of law-enforcement agencies, MasterCard and PayPal. It will be ready for full rollout later this year.

Additional priorities include recruiting financial institutions, particularly those that operate outside the United States, and development of a best practices document for vetting merchants who want to join the payments system.

Ten Tips for Social Networking Safety

As a parent or guardian, it's important that you take an active role in promoting your children's safety online. First, discuss these tips with your children, and then post them near the computer for easy reference. For more information and resources, log onto Blog Beware at www.NetSmartz.org.

1. Be aware that information you give out in blogs or profiles could put you at risk; people looking to harm you could use the information you post to pretend they know you and to gain your trust.

2. Never post personal information such as your cell phone number, address, or the name of your school or school team.

3. Never give your password to anyone other than your parent or guardian.

4. Check the privacy settings of the social networking site that you use; choose settings that allow you to control who sees your profile and who is added as your friend.

5. Only permit people you know in person to view your site or to be on your list of friends.

6. Never meet in person with anyone you first met on a social networking site. Some people may not be who they say they are.

7. Never respond to harassing or rude comments posted by others on your site or profile. Delete any unwanted messages and block those friends who leave inappropriate comments. Report those comments to the networking site if they violate that site's terms of service.

8. Think before posting your photos. Look at the backgrounds of the pictures to make sure you are not giving out any identifying information, such as school names or locations, the name of a mall, the license plate of your car, signs, or the name of your sports team.

9. Protect your friends by not posting any names, passwords, ages, phone numbers, school names, or locations. Refrain from making or posting plans and activities on your site.

10. Before posting, go through your blog or profile and remove information that could put you at risk.

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Brenda Gomez

Endangered Missing
Date Missing: 07/23/2004
DOB: 12/07/2000
Height: 3'05"   Weight: 32lbs
Eyes: Brown   Hair: Brown
Missing From: Logan City, UT
CONTACT: Logan City Police Department (Utah)
1-435-716-9400
Details: Brenda may be in the company of her non-custodial father. They may still be in the local area or they may have traveled to Mexico. Brenda has a red mark on her nose.

Chayton Hutchins

Endangered Missing
Date Missing: 01/30/2003
DOB: 10/12/1993
Height: 4'06"   Weight: 70lbs
Eyes: Brown   Hair: Black
Missing From: Bartow, FL
CONTACT: Polk County Sheriff's Office (Florida)
1-863-533-0344
Details: Chayton may be in the company of his non-custodial mother. They may have traveled out of state. Chayton's front teeth are decayed. His nicknames are Chase and Chay.

Laila Patterson

Endangered Missing
Date Missing: 04/09/2006
DOB: 12/29/2004
Height: 2'06"   Weight: 22lbs
Eyes: Brown   Hair: Black
Missing From: Greensboro, NC
CONTACT: Greensboro Police Department
(North Carolina) 1-336-373-2222
Details: Laila was last seen on April 9, 2006. She may be in the company of her non-custodial father. They may still be in the local area or they may travel to Virginia. Laila's ears are pierced. Her nicknames are Lailabell and Juicy.