

# Department of Justice

## United States Attorney David Capp Northern District of Indiana

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### FT. WAYNE MAN CHARGED WITH DISTRIBUTING AND POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Fort Wayne, IN—The United States Attorney's Office announced that a Grand Jury sitting in Hammond, Indiana, returned the following Indictment on October 20, 2011:

Michael Watkins, 54, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, is charged in a two count Indictment with one count of distributing child pornography on or about July 16, 2011, and one count of possessing child pornography on or about October 6, 2011.

The investigation into Watkins's conduct began in July 2011, when law enforcement working in an undercover capacity used a publicly available peer-to-peer file sharing program to download images and video files depicting children engaged in sexually explicit conduct from another user. The results of an administrative subpoena issued to the internet service provider of the user identified the subscriber as residing at a specific address in Fort Wayne, Indiana. A federal search warrant was subsequently obtained and executed at that address and law enforcement was able to confirm that Watkins was the user in question. A preliminary search of Watkins' computer revealed images and videos depicting minors being caused to engage in sexual acts. Watkins admitted to law enforcement that he had used the peer-to-peer program to download child pornography and that he understood and failed to disable the sharing function of that program.

This charge was filed as a result of an investigation by the U.S. Immigration and Custom Office of Homeland Security Investigations and the Noblesville, Indiana Police Department. This case has been assigned to and will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Lesley Miller Lowery.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

The United States Attorney's Office emphasized that an Indictment is merely an allegation and that all persons charged are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.

The specific sentence in each case to be imposed upon conviction will be determined by the judge after a consideration of federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.