



FACT SHEET: PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD

Project Safe Childhood

- Project Safe Childhood is the Department of Justice initiative launched in 2006 to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children. The threat of sexual predators soliciting children for physical sexual contact is well-known and serious. The danger of perpetrators who produce, distribute and possess child pornography is equally dramatic and disturbing. There is often an international dimension to these crimes – for example, some offenders travel to victimize children outside of the United States or view live video streams (in addition to recorded still and video images) of children being abused in foreign countries.
- The department is committed to the safety and well-being of every child and has placed a high priority on combating sexual exploitation of minors. Through a network of federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies and advocacy organizations, Project Safe Childhood attempts to protect children by investigating and prosecuting offenders involved in child sexual exploitation.
- The department expanded Project Safe Childhood in May 2011 to encompass all federal crimes involving the sexual exploitation of a minor, including sex trafficking of a minor and crimes against children committed in Indian country. Failure to register as a sex offender offenses now also fall within the ambit of Project Safe Childhood.
- Project Safe Childhood is implemented through partnerships with numerous stakeholders, including: U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAOs) and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys; the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces; federal law enforcement partners, including the FBI, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS); advocacy organizations such as the National Institute of Justice; and state, local, tribal and military law enforcement officials.

Enforcement & Casework

- Because of Project Safe Childhood, the number of federal prosecutions involving child sexual exploitation has increased significantly. These prosecutions have resulted from an increased number of international, federal, state, local and tribal investigations.
- In fiscal year 2014, USAOs obtained 3,248 indictments against 3,422 defendants for offenses involving the sexual exploitation of minors. This represents a 31 percent increase in the number of indictments over fiscal year 2010. These crimes have ranged from production of obscene visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct to receipt, distribution, possession and/or production of child pornography to the direct physical, sexual abuse of a minor.
- Since the launch of Project Safe Childhood, thousands of children depicted in child pornography have been identified through enhanced law enforcement coordination, multi-jurisdictional collaborative efforts and additional contributions by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC).
- Since the inception of Project Safe Childhood, CEOS, in partnership with the FBI, HSI and the USFIS, has developed and coordinated many nationwide and international operations targeting the production, distribution, receipt and possession of child images. For instance between fiscal years 2013 and 2015, 14 nationwide operations were conducted, resulting in the investigation of over 2,600 individuals in the United States and generated leads against more than 8,000 foreign suspects. Many of these cases are prosecuted by USAOs throughout the nation, often in conjunction with trial attorneys and additional resources from CEOS.
- As part of Project Safe Childhood, the department has collaborated with international law enforcement partners to secure the arrest of child pornography producers and collectors around the world. In Operation Delego, for example, CEOS helped identify a global child pornography network and facilitated the arrest of offenders in 14 countries on five continents. Several major international law enforcement investigations – such as Operation Joint Hammer and Operation Nest Egg – have successfully dismantled multiple international child pornography organizations. In doing so, the department has coordinated efforts with international law enforcement agencies such as Eurojust, the judicial cooperation arm of the European Union, to ensure that every available resource is put to use. These alliances also ensure that child pornography distributors, collectors and producers around the world are identified, apprehended and held accountable for their actions.
- In 2016, the department released a new National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction, a roadmap to building on our successes and tackling new challenges during the next several years. Formulated over the course of a year by an interagency working group, this strategy harnesses the expertise of law enforcement at all levels, as well as the experience and knowledge of non-governmental stakeholders. It identifies innovative ways in which the federal government and its partners can address child exploitation. And it reaffirms our unwavering commitment to ensuring that all

children in America are able to reach their potential in a nation that protects them from violence and abuse. This follows on the department's original national strategy, which helped formalize key partnerships, streamlined prevention and prosecution efforts and improved regional and interagency collaboration in order to maximize all available resources.

- Project Safe Childhood has also been highly effective in apprehending and convicting offenders who have traveled or attempted to travel across interstate or foreign borders with the intent to either sexually abuse a minor or engage in other illicit conduct. Many defendants have held positions of public trust – ranging from an elementary school principal to a State Department-affiliated special agent.
- Since the inception of its CyberTipline in 1998, NCMEC has processed more than 8.4 million reports (nearly half of those in 2015) related to incidents of child sexual exploitation, the majority of which relate to activities connected to child pornography and the internet. Since the CyberTipline was created, NCMEC has seen a dramatic increase in the number of reports received.

Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces

- In 1998, the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) recognized the significant risk of technology-facilitated child exploitation. In response, OJJDP developed the ICAC Task Force Program. The purpose of the ICAC Task Force Program is to help regional, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies acquire the knowledge, equipment and personnel resources they need to prevent, investigate and stop sexual crimes against minors.
- The ICAC Program has facilitated the training of more than 500,000 law enforcement professionals since its inception, providing valuable techniques related to investigating, prosecuting and preventing technology-enabled crimes against children.
- There are 61 ICAC Task Forces across the country, each composed of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. These task forces represent more than 3,500 federal, state and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies.
- Since the program's inception in 1998, the ICAC Task Forces have reviewed thousands of complaints of alleged child sexual victimization. In fiscal year 2015, ICAC Task Forces conducted more than 54,000 investigations that resulted in the arrest of more than 8,500 individuals.

Continued Support for Project Safe Childhood Efforts

- In July 2006, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (AWA) gave the USMS three main missions: investigate registered sex offenders who violate the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act; assist state, local, tribal and territorial authorities in locating and apprehending non-compliant sex offenders; and identify and locate sex offenders who are displaced as a result of a major disaster. The USMS instituted the

National Sex Offender Targeting Center, located in Arlington, Virginia, to achieve its mission under the AWA in 2009.

- Between May 1, 2010 and May 1, 2015, the USMS opened 16,320 investigations of convicted sex offenders for violations of AWA and arrested 2,671 individuals on federal sex offender registration charges. USMS closed by arrest 23,986 state/local warrants charging failure to register during that period, and based on USMS's investigations, federal prosecutors obtained 2,375 convictions.
- The USMS's National Sex Offender Targeting Center has partners with several agencies, including the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Justice's Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking (SMART) Office to identify 18 U.S.C. § 2250 violations by tracking sex offenders who travel in and out of the United States and fail to comply with the mandated registration requirements.
- The National Sex Offender Targeting Center coordinated with INTERPOL to create a system to notify DSS of U.S. sex offender travel to regional security officer areas of responsibility. The agreement with DSS and INTERPOL is an important step forward in expanding the USMS's participation around the world to meet the growing challenges of tracking non-compliant sex offenders who travel internationally.
- Recent operations have required international law enforcement to use all available investigative measures to overcome child sexual exploitation offenders' use of sophisticated technologies, such as anonymizers and encryption. USAOs work jointly with CEOS's High Technology Investigative Unit to prosecute cutting-edge, nuanced child exploitation crimes. CEOS also trains Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs) and other partners in child exploitation prosecution, publishes a quarterly newsletter and distributes a case digest to AUSAs and federal agents. CEOS is at the forefront of campaigns aimed at combating international child sex tourism, such as the Innocence Lost Initiative.
- AUSAs from USAOs across the country are trained annually regarding Project Safe Childhood statutes and policies at the National Advocacy Center in Columbia, South Carolina. In addition, national training took place in April 2016 in Atlanta and attracted approximately 1,400 attendees from state, local, non-profit, tribal, international and federal agencies.

The Future of Project Safe Childhood: Ongoing Challenges

- Technological advances have encouraged child sexual exploitation offenders, especially those operating online, to an unprecedented degree. For every new technology that fills a need for law-abiding citizens, online child sexual exploitation offenders will find a malicious use. Among the most daunting and prevalent is offender utilization of anonymization networks, including Tor and Freenet, to obscure their identities. Because of the perceived anonymity, the most prolific and sophisticated offenders feel empowered

to share enormous quantities of the most vile child exploitation images on a multitude of Internet bulletin boards.

- Many of the most dangerous child sexual exploitation offenders have increasingly migrated to organized group enterprises, where they can collaborate with other like-minded offenders to perpetrate their offenses. These group activities are disturbing because they serve to validate, normalize and encourage sexual behaviors directed towards children that are widely condemned by society at large. These groups also assist in thwarting law enforcement by sharing encryption and anonymization practices, or the best venues to place ads promoting commercial sexual abuse of minors.
- Even after child pornography producers are identified and convicted, their recordings still circulate online and elsewhere for the continued consumption by other like-minded offenders; therefore, the danger of the production, distribution and possession of child pornography remains multifaceted and disturbing for victims all over the world.
- Project Safe Childhood relies upon the ongoing efforts and relationships between law enforcement agencies, nonprofit entities (including schools), advocacy organizations and many others to protect and defend children against sexual exploitation and abuse. In order for Project Safe Childhood to continue to fulfill its mission, all partners will need to continue to work collaboratively to keep pace with those who seek to harm any child.