

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE *for the* EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

# *Signature Series*



*John M. Baker*

# CHILD EXPLOITATION

# Protecting the Most Vulnerable Victims

Children are among the most vulnerable victims of crimes in our society. Crimes against children are often predicated upon the abuse of a child’s trust, and the impact of such crimes are often felt for many, many years. The ability of criminals to prey upon children has only increased in recent years as technology has given predators much more access into cities, neighborhoods, and homes. From the creation, distribution, and possession of child pornography to the solicitation of children for sexual misconduct, predators have the Internet and other means of communication to seek out the most vulnerable victims in our community. The United States Department of Justice – and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Texas – have not sat idly by while the threat to our children has increased.

### *Project Safe Childhood*

In 2006, the Department of Justice launched Project Safe Childhood, a multijurisdictional program involving federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, and United States Attorney’s Offices across the country, with the idea that a collaborative approach would be the most effective way to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children.

Since the inception of Project Safe Childhood, there have been over 8000 federal cases filed involving almost 9000 defendants. In each year, the number of Project Safe Childhood prosecutions has increased as a result of greater cooperation and more efficiency.

Moreover, since the Project Safe Childhood program began, over two thousand children – vic-

tims of child pornography offenses – have been identified, with many being rescued.

### *Continuing challenges*

While the Project Safe Childhood initiative has been successful, child exploitation crimes continue to be of significant concern. For example, in just five years, twenty million Internet protocol addresses have been identified as offering child pornography pictures and videos in peer-to-peer file sharing networks, one popular method that indi-

viduals use the Internet to trade and distribute child pornography. According to a United Nations investigation in 2009, there were over four million web sites worldwide depicting images of children being sexually exploited. And in 2009 and 2010, two prominent social networking sites had to delete the

accounts of thousands of registered sex offenders using their sites.

The epidemic of online child exploitation is growing: for every new trend in technology, there arises a danger of that technology being used in a way to threaten our children. Through partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, and a commitment to educating our communities, the Eastern District of Texas continues to lead the way in protecting our children.

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*“A fair test of the morality of any society is how that society protects its children. Child pornography, child exploitation, child sex tourism are present cancers in our body politic and they are a direct threat to our children. In the Eastern District of Texas, the U.S. Attorney’s Office is working in strategic partnerships all over east Texas to identify, investigate and prosecute any individual who dares to victimize a child in this fashion. We will not rest while our children are at risk.”*

*John M. Bales, United States Attorney*

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## A Collaborative Approach

Child exploitation offenses are crimes that affect the entire community. Predators are no longer restricted to historical boundaries that kept their crimes localized. The Internet, for example, has expanded the reach of child predators from their neighborhoods and cities to other states and even other countries. While some predators use the Internet to entice and manipulate children into situations in which they become vulnerable to sexual exploitation, others use the Internet to collect images and videos of child pornography, meet other collectors of such media, and trade the images and videos in order to build their own collections. Predators now hide in their homes while exploiting children half a world away.

As the Internet has obliterated traditional notions regarding jurisdiction, it has become clear that traditional methods of investigation are equally outdated. The Eastern District of Texas uses a collaborative approach to identifying, investigating, and prosecuting child predators. To best investigate and prosecute child exploitation crimes, the Eastern District has built multi-jurisdictional teams throughout the district:

### *Sherman Division*

- In the Sherman Division, the Plano Police Department works seamlessly with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, the United States Secret Service, and the United States Postal Inspectors to identify and investigate online predators.

### Key Federal Statutes

- 18 U.S.C. § 2250 (Failure to register as a sex offender)
- 18 U.S.C. § 2251 (Sexual exploitation of children)
- 18 U.S.C. §§ 2252 and 2252A (Transportation, sale, possession, or production of child pornography)
- 18 U.S.C. § 2423 (Transportation of minors for sexual activity)



### *Tyler Division*

- In the Tyler Division, the Longview Police Department is at the center of almost every Project Safe Childhood investigation and works hand-in-hand with the United States Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Homeland Security Investigations. The Longview Police Department has the expertise and capability to conduct its own computer forensic examinations in an efficient and effective manner, which helps to quickly bring predators to justice.

### *Beaumont Division*

- In the Beaumont Division, the Beaumont Police Department and Homeland Security Investigations work in tandem investigating predators. Like the Longview Police Department, the Beaumont Police Department is also fully capable of conducting independent, precise, and efficient computer forensic examinations.

The Eastern District of Texas has also worked to build relationships with local district attorney's offices and with the Texas Attorney General's office. This comprehensive approach is reflected in hundreds of successful investigations and prosecutions of child predators. These teams, paired with the district's community outreach efforts, underscore the importance of working together to protect our children.

## Notable Eastern District Prosecutions: “Traveler” and “Transporter” Cases

The Internet has revolutionized the way that people shop, read the news, and even interact. It has also created an environment where children are placed at risk of contact by sexual predators. Individuals who use the Internet to seek to meet children in order to engage in sexual activities must be brought to justice. Accordingly, the Eastern District of Texas devotes significant efforts to successfully investigating and prosecuting these types of predators. Two examples of recent successful efforts are the prosecutions of Don Dwayne McAdams in Plano, Texas, and Rodney Ray Hayes in Texarkana, Texas.

### **Don Dwayne McAdams**

Don Dwayne McAdams, 41, was a truck driver who traveled between Texas and Oklahoma. Prior to May 3, 2008, McAdams met a 16-year old girl on a social networking website, lied about his age, and became the victim’s “boyfriend.” Eventually McAdams and his victim made plans to meet in the victim’s hometown in East Texas, where McAdams picked her up, transported her to his home in Bethany, Oklahoma, and had sex with her. McAdams returned his victim to Texas; however, he left her stranded over 100 miles from her home.

While the victim’s parents were unaware of McAdams’s existence or his plan to meet and travel with their daughter, the parents did come across McAdams’s phone number when they were searching for their daughter. The victim’s parents gave this information to law enforcement.

A joint investigation by the Plano Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation led to the identification of McAdams as the perpetrator and also identified another of his victims in Oklahoma. At the conclusion of the investigation, a federal grand jury indicted McAdams on April 8, 2009, for the transportation of a minor in interstate commerce.

McAdams pled guilty on Oct. 13, 2009, and on February 18, 2010, United States District Judge

Richard A. Schell sentenced McAdams to a term of imprisonment in excess of ten years. McAdams is required to register as a sex offender upon his re-

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*“Two-thirds of the sex offenders in state prisons committed offenses against children. There are more than 620,000 registered sex offenders in the U.S. today. At least 100,000 are noncompliant and missing. No one knows where they are.”*

*National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*

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lease from prison.

### **Rodney Ray Hayes**

Rodney Ray Hayes, 44, was also known as the “Texas Kid,” a rodeo champion and trick rider who had a professional rodeo act based out of Linden, Texas. According to Hayes’s website, the road show, dubbed The Pony Express, included “27 young men and ladies to date that have come from all walks of life to join Rodney as he entertains crowds across America,” and adds that “Rodney has a heart filled with love for kids and enjoys teaching them about responsibility, patriotism, and good clean American fun.”

As part of his rodeo act, Hayes had children under the age of 18 travel with him across state lines in order to perform their acts at a variety of rodeos. An investigation led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and assisted by law enforcement agencies throughout Texas revealed that at various times between March of 2005 and June of 2008, Hayes engaged in sexual contact with at least one minor.

On September 7, 2010, a federal grand jury indicted Hayes on charges related to the transportation of minors with intent to engage in illicit sexual activity. Hayes pled guilty to the charge on April 29, 2011. At sentencing, Hayes will face a possible imprisonment for thirty years. Upon his release from prison, Hayes will be required to register as a sex offender.

## Notable Eastern District Prosecutions: Possession of Child Pornography Cases

Nowhere is the devastating impact of child exploitation felt more keenly than in the possession, production, and distribution of child pornography. Child pornography is never a one-time offense; rather, children are victimized when the photographs or recordings are taken and again each time their images are shared among their predators. The cornerstone of the Project Safe Childhood program in the Eastern District of Texas is our tireless effort to identify, investigate, and prosecute those who possess, receive, distribute, transport, and produce child pornography.

Prosecutions in the Eastern District of Texas have regularly targeted individuals who have routine contact with children as a function of their employment or their hobbies, placing them among dozens, if not hundreds, of potential victims. Successful prosecution involves the team-based efforts of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies along with passionate, committed prosecutors.

Recent successful prosecutions in the Eastern District of Texas have included the following cases:

- Paul Gove, 28, of Plano, Texas, possessed over 150,000 images and videos containing child pornography. Gove had previously been employed as a hockey referee for youth divisions at the Dr. Pepper Stars' Center in Frisco, Texas. On April 22, 2010, Gove pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography. On April 25, 2011, a federal district court sentenced Gove to a term of imprisonment of 10 years.
- Richard Missler, 54, of Carrollton, Texas, was a high school teacher who used a peer-to-peer software sharing program to trade images of child pornography with other predators on the Internet.

After a federal grand jury indicted Missler on charges of transporting child pornography, Missler pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to over 17 years in federal prison on April 25, 2011.

- Jacob Leeroy Eckert, 64, of Nevada, Texas, was indicted by a federal grand jury on four counts of distributing child pornography. Eckert pleaded guilty to the indictment and on April 25, 2011, he received a sentence of 20 years in federal prison and a lifetime of supervised release after two vic-

tims who were sexually abused by Eckert gave graphic accounts of the abuse they endured at his hands.

- Philip Baker, 54, of Denton, Texas, was charged in an eight count indictment for advertising child pornography on the Internet and for transportation and receipt of child pornography. Baker, a former middle school assistant principal, pleaded guilty in January of 2011 and faces up to 30 years in prison for the advertising charge and up to 20 years

on the transportation and receipt charges.

- Patrick Sanders, 52, of Lufkin, Texas, pleaded guilty on April 22, 2010, to possessing child pornography. His collection was located on his computer at the Boys and Girls Club in Lufkin where he served as the Director. A federal district judge sentenced Sanders to 52 months in federal prison.
- Albert Slatter, Jr., was a 59-year-old assistant band director for the Longview Independent School District. Law enforcement found Slatter to be in possession of images of child pornography on his home computer. On April 29, 2010, Slatter was sentenced to federal prison for possessing images of child pornography.

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*"In a study of arrested child pornography possessors, 40 percent had both sexually victimized children and were in possession of child pornography. Of those arrested between 2000 and 2001, 83 percent had images involving children between the ages of 6 and 12; 39 percent had images of children between ages 3 and 5; and 19 percent had images of infants and toddlers under age 3."*

*National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*

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## Educating the Community

The identification, investigation, and prosecution of child predators is crucial in punishing the offenders and deterring future predators from taking advantage of our children. However, underscoring every successful prosecution of a child predator is the tragic understanding that a child has already been victimized.

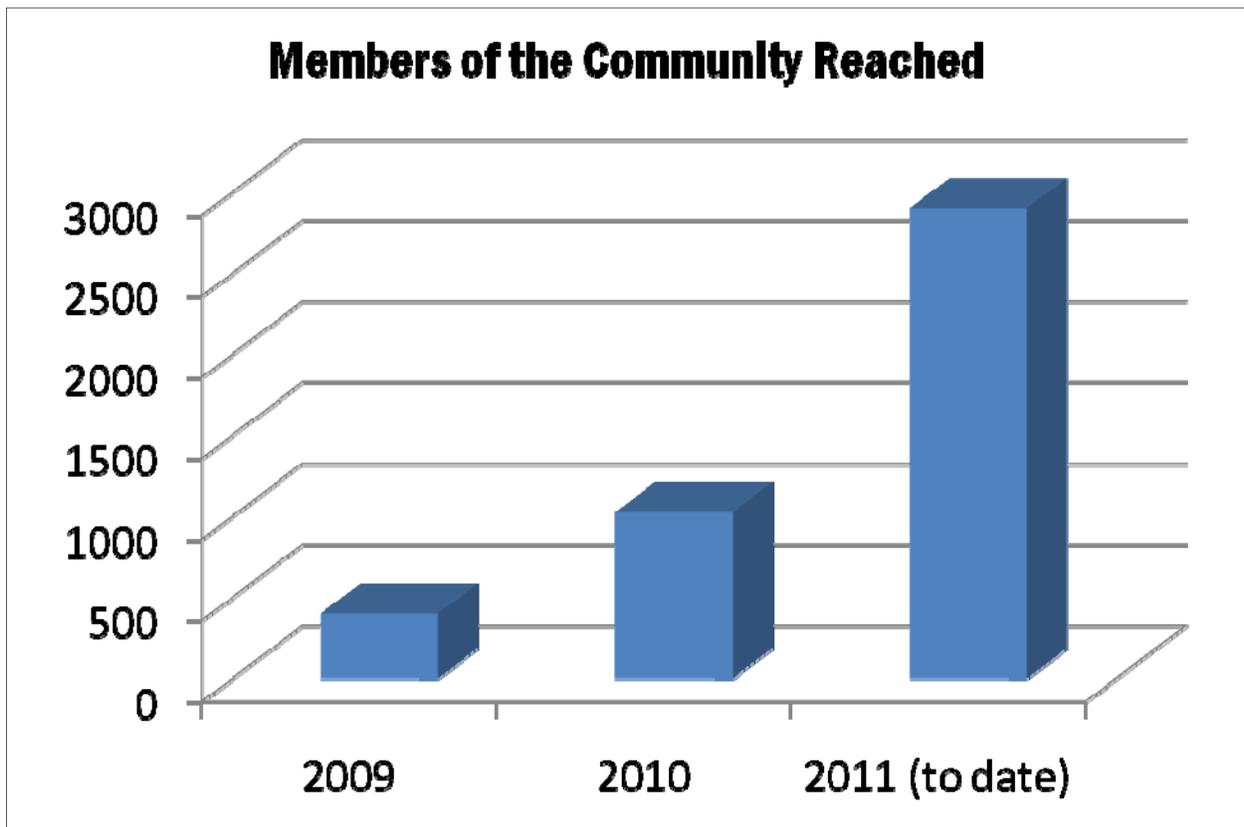
Because of this simple but inescapable fact, the Eastern District of Texas is committed to educating the members of the community to help ensure that our children do not become victims of child predators. Information, including the means by which children and adults can recognize the actions of predators, is crucial in preventing victimization.

Prosecutors from the Eastern District regularly visit with parents and other members of the community to discuss such issues as online predators, Internet safety, the dangers of “sexting,” and the impact of cyber-bullying. However, the Eastern District has also expanded its efforts to include

presentations made directly to middle school and high school children, working to empower them to make smarter and more informed choices when using technology. The Eastern District also educates local, state, and federal law enforcement and other attorneys about the Project Safe Childhood program.

In 2011 alone, the Eastern District has made presentations to, among others, the Rockwall Independent School District, the Plano Independent School District, local Boy Scouts, parent-teacher organizations, and several private schools. In 2010, the Eastern District made presentations in such places as the Commerce Independent School District, the Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District, the Bonham Independent School District, the Denton Independent School District, and the University of North Texas.

The Eastern District will continue these efforts in 2011 and in years beyond.



# What Lies Ahead

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, “approximately one in seven youth online (10 to 17-years-old) received a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet . . . Four percent received an aggressive sexual solicitation.” While the Project Safe Childhood initiative is a strong start, only commitment, education, and awareness will help our communities protect our children.

Prosecutions of predators have increased every year since Project Safe Childhood began, and that trend is mirrored in the Eastern District of Texas. With successful collaborative programs in place in the Sherman and Tyler Divisions, the Eastern District will seek to establish strong partnerships in the Beaumont Division as well.

In addition to continuing to identify, investigate, and prosecute those individuals that traffic in child pornography, the Eastern District will begin working more closely with the United States Marshal’s Service to identify and prosecute criminals who have failed to register as sex offenders when required to do so. The Eastern District has also expanded its efforts to target those individuals who engage in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

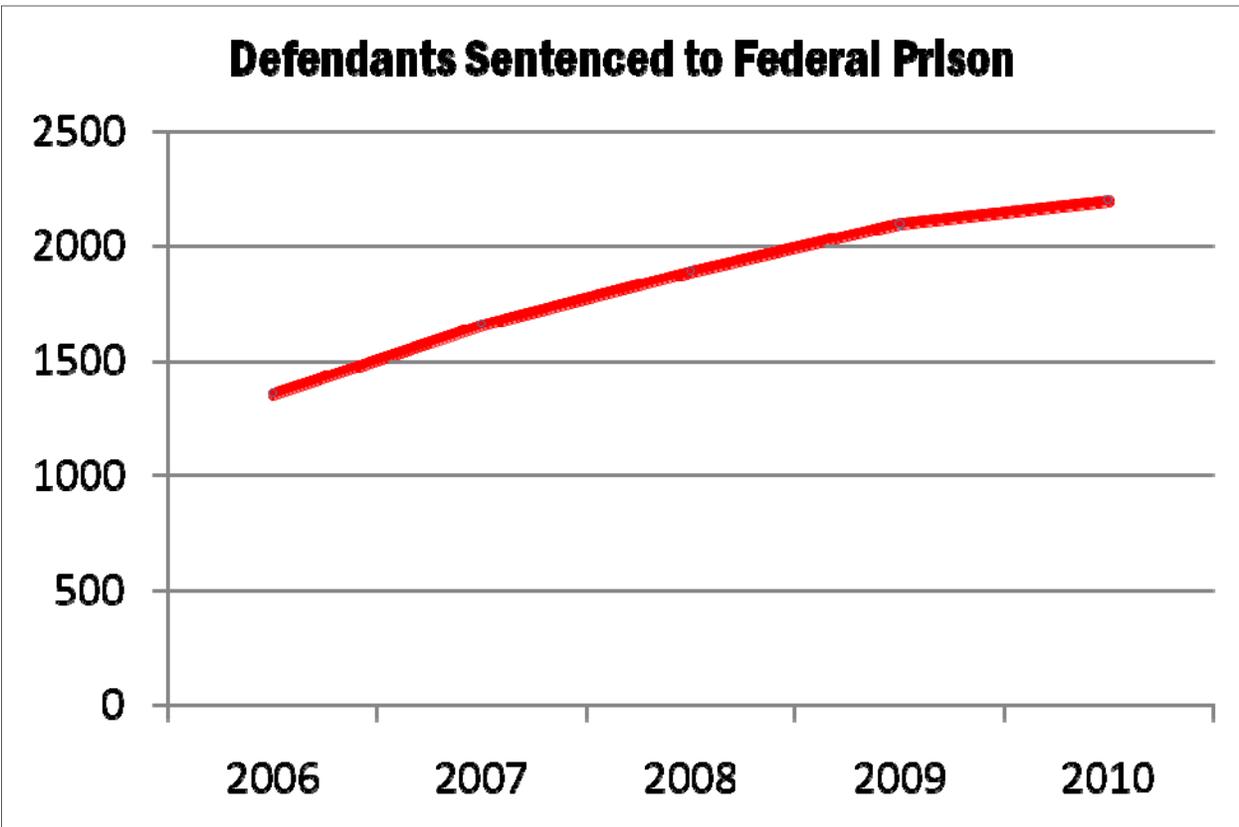
Child exploitation is a crime that strikes at the roots of our communities. By working together, by collaborating, by educating our children and parents, and by identifying, investigating, and prosecuting predators, we can move closer to a safe environment for our children.

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*“Child pornography is one of the fastest growing businesses online, and the content is becoming much worse. In 2008, Internet Watch Foundation found 1,536 individual child abuse domains . . . 58 percent are housed in the United States.”*

*Internet Watch Foundation. Annual Report, 2008*

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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE *for the* EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

*For more information about child exploitation or to report a suspected child exploitation crime, please contact:*

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