



SUSPECT ONLINE ENTICEMENT? REPORT IT.



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800-THE-LOST
NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION HAPPENS **ONLINE** TOO.

BUT YOU CAN HELP PREVENT IT.

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

According to the FBI, there are an estimated 750,000 child predators online at any given moment¹ - all with the goal to enter your home undetected, through the internet, and into the lives of your children. Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) is the use of the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child. One of the most significant types of online child sexual exploitation is the creation and distribution of child sexual abuse images and videos. With more use of the internet in every aspect of our children's lives, we must learn how to protect them by recognizing the signs and symptoms of online exploitation. Offenders may want sexual images of your children, or may be manipulating them into a situation to engage in a sexual act with them.

While there's a wide range of OCSE, we see a dangerous trend of cases rising significantly since 2013 called "sextortion." This is a type of sexual abuse involving the control of a child through force, threats or manipulation on a variety of online social media platforms. According to reports of sextortion to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), 56% of sextortion of children involved only one online platform, whereas 42% involved multiple. In cases involving multiple platforms, the offender would "meet" a child on more of a public social media platform, and then later once trust has been established, move to an encrypted or private platform such as a messaging app or live-stream video. It is then on these platforms where the child is then subjected to threats and blackmail. Often the offender may have access to previously posted content that was created when the child was for example in a previous romantic relationship, posted by the now ex. In those situations, the offender may be more immediately aggressive about seeking additional sexual images of the child. On other occasions, where no preexisting sexual image exists, often the first step is the offender befriending a young person to build an emotional connection to gain their trust and establish a relationship for the ultimate goal of sexual exploitation. This is called "grooming."

Children can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know. An offender can be any age, even the same age as the child. It will often involve an offender providing something to a child such as encouragement, praise, acknowledgement, affection, and sometimes gifts. Grooming offenders trick their victim into building a friendship or even a romantic relationship. This can lead to an actual meeting of the offender and child for the purposes of a sexual encounter.

In other cases, once they have the child's trust or control over them, an offender will then move on to manipulate the child to provide sexual images of him or herself to the offender. The grooming process can take days, weeks, months, or longer. Once one image is provided, using the threat of shame, embarrassment, guilt, or even physical harm to the child or loved ones, the offender will escalate the situation by using the illicit image to extort additional sexual images or at times real-time sexual acts which the offender is recording. When the offender starts blackmailing and threatening the child such as in this Can You See Me? video, sextortion occurs. In sextortion cases reported to NCMEC, the child victims are both male and female, and range in age from 8-17 years with an average age of 15. However, the child victims in the younger range tend to be female. In a smaller number of reported cases, the offender extorts the child to engage in sex. While these demographics are based on the data collected at NCMEC, it's important to remember children of any gender identity or age could be a victim of sextortion.

¹ Henry, S. (2011, 8 May). Shawn Henry on Cyber Safety. Retrieved from https://www.fbi.gov/video-repository/newss-henry_051611/view.



THE LAW

Federal law prohibits sexual enticement or attempted enticement of a minor online.² It is also a violation of federal law for anybody to persuade a minor to create child sexual abuse images of themselves, including certain types of nude photos, as well as to use threats to extort an item of value.³ This is in addition to each individual states' laws prohibiting and penalizing online child sexual exploitation offenses. Even if a child voluntarily engages in such conduct or is initially willing to send explicit images of him/herself, consent is not a defense to this crime. It is important to report any suspicious behavior to the police, or NCMEC's CyberTipline. It is highly likely that an offender is sexually exploiting or attempting to sexually exploit more than one child online.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUSPECTED OFFENDER⁴

- An offender is typically male but may often pose as a female
- Often pretends to be younger than their actual age
- Uses multiple online identities
- Targets multiple children on one, or multiple platforms
- Develops relationship by the use of praise, compliments, shared interests (often falsified), acting empathetically
- Seeks out children who may be struggling with real-life issues - social acceptance, friendships, attention, success at school, boredom – and aims to be the online “solution”
- Establishes a relationship of trust and dependence whether platonic or romantic
- Threatens to publish acquired inappropriate content online
- Threatens to share sexually explicit conversations with the victim online
- Threatens to reveal images, videos or conversations to family/friends if the child does not comply
- Secretly records sexually explicit videos of the child
- Threatens to hurt or sexually assault the child or family members
- Offers presents or rewards as an incentive for the child to send sexually explicit material
- Offender's objective is to gather content, to elicit sexual contact or for financial gain

² Title 18, United States Code, Section 2422(b) [Coercion and Enticement] prohibits the use of mail or any facility or means of interstate or foreign commerce to knowingly persuade, induce, entice, or coerce any minor, to engage in prostitution or any illegal sexual activity or any such attempt. 18 U.S.C. Sec. 2422(b) (2006).

³ Title 18, United States Code, Section 2251(a) criminalizes the enticement or persuasion of a minor to create child sexual abuse images, or the attempt to do so, through the use of the internet, amongst other means. 18 U.S.C. Sec. 2251(a) (2008). Title 18, United States Code, Section 875, prohibits in relevant part, extortion through use of the internet. 18 U.S.C. Sec. 875 (1986).

⁴ This list is not exhaustive of all characteristics of offenders of online child sexual exploitation, but is a compilation of some of the most common attributes. Offenders may exhibit some but not all characteristics.

SAFETY TIPS

- Talk with your child, and keep the lines of communication engaged and open.
 - Adopt a non-judgmental attitude.
 - Steer away from a “shaming” attitude which can hinder your child from speaking to you.
 - Be candid about the dangers of the internet.
 - Your child may not speak up about this - most predators will not immediately threaten your child, but will wait until after having some level of engagement, and then threaten with exposure to family and friends.
 - Recognizing many children want an online presence, be open to finding common ground with them, allowing the child an opportunity to engage with their friends but in a safe way.
- Create a plan of action so your child knows what to do next if someone asks them for images or videos, or if they sent an image/video and now are being threatened. Review or locate the “report abuse” sections of each platform with your child and show them how to use them.
- A child may feel pressure to “sext” images or videos with their current boyfriend or girlfriend. Once taken and sent to their significant other, it may be used against them later. Remember that once images or videos are given to anyone, the child no longer has control over what happens with that image or video.
- Monitor your child’s social media accounts to know the type and level of activity of engagement by your child.
- Ensure that only known individuals are accepted as “friends” on your child’s social media account.
- Ensure that your child’s privacy settings on websites, platforms are enabled and adequately set.
- Try to ensure that your child’s online status does not express an emotional vulnerability. People who exploit children may use these types of posts to identify children with vulnerabilities as potential victims.
- Images should not be sent to anyone that the child would not want widely shared.
- A child should not chat online to anyone that she or he does not personally know.
- Be aware that video calls can be surreptitiously recorded by the other party.
- If possible, restrict use of your child’s online activities to a public place in the house.

USEFUL RESOURCES TO COMBAT OCSE IN THE U.S.

- If you think a child could be in immediate danger, call **911**
- Report suspicions of an online offender to your local police, your Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force (<https://www.icactaskforce.org/Pages/ContactsTaskForce.aspx>), or the NCMEC CyberTipline at **1-800-THE-LOST** or CyberTipline.org
- If you are concerned about a child’s welfare, report to your local child protective services hotline or the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at **1-800-4-A-CHILD** or through www.childhelp.org/hotline
- Report any online exploitation including child sexual abuse images to the NCMEC CyberTipline at **1-800-THE-LOST** or CyberTipline.org
- If a child wants to talk to someone, RAINN is here to listen 24/7. They can reach, free, anonymous, confidential help at **1-800-656-HOPE (4673)** or online at online.rainn.org.



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