

# What is Online Enticement of Children for Sexual Acts

Online enticement, the use of the Internet to entice, invite, or persuade a child to meet for sexual acts or to help arrange such a meeting, is a serious offense.<sup>1</sup>

The Internet holds tremendous potential for our nation's youth; however, the misuse of the Internet to prey on them is a serious problem requiring action by legislators, families, communities, and law enforcement.<sup>2</sup>

There are risks for children who use the Internet or online services. Teenagers are particularly at risk because they often use the computer unsupervised and are more likely than younger children to participate in online discussions regarding companionship, relationships, or sexual activity. A child might provide information or arrange an encounter that could risk his or her safety or the safety of other family members.

Predators have used E-mail, instant messages, bulletin boards, and chat areas to gain a child's confidence and then arrange a face-to-face meeting. This sometimes leads to the child traveling to meet the person he or she is chatting with or the person traveling to meet the child. Sometimes the other party is an adult whose intent is to have sex with the child.<sup>3</sup>

Based on a study of 1,500 Internet users, ages 10 to 17, approximately one in seven received an unwanted sexual solicitation between 1999 and 2000. Four percent of these youths experienced an aggressive solicitation, where the solicitor attempted to contact the child offline. Only five percent of these solicitations were reported to law enforcement, an Internet service provider, or other authority.<sup>4</sup>

## What is being done about this problem?

Law-enforcement officials are tracking down an ever-increasing number of "predators" on the Internet. There is now more specialized training available to law-enforcement regarding this issue.<sup>5</sup> State and local task forces are forming at ever-increasing numbers to combat Internet-related child exploitation. Through funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 46 Internet Crimes Against Children task force units have been set up nationwide and currently focus on child sexual exploitation online. One of the most important tools for law-enforcement personnel and families was the development of NCMEC's CyberTipline. This online reporting mechanism has initiated numerous investigations and arrests of child predators.

<sup>1</sup> 18 U.S.C. 2425.

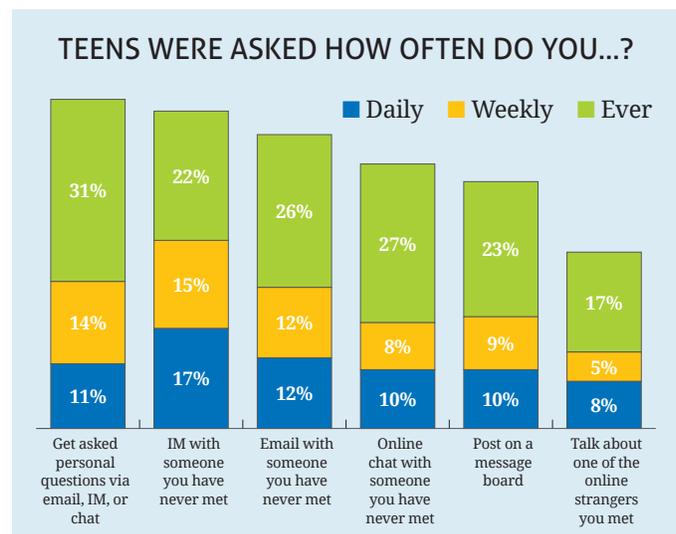
<sup>2</sup> Janis Wolak, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and David Finkelhor. *Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2006, vii.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence J. Magid. *Child Safety on the Information Highway*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 1998, page 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later*, supra pages 1 and 2.

<sup>5</sup> David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. *Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth*. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2000, page 35.

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## What can be done to prevent this from happening?

The responsibility of preventing and resolving Internet crimes against children is not merely a federal or local issue. Technology has demonstrated it to be a global responsibility, because it can be a borderless crime. By informing communities about the many existing resources available and having caregivers taking a more active role, we can make the journey through cyberspace safer for children.

