

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** about online child sexual exploitation

### **1. What is online child sexual exploitation?**

Exposing a child to unwanted sexual content or unwanted material online and uninvited requests for sexual conversations. Employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing a minor to engage in any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct.

### **2. What are some examples of online sexual solicitations reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)?**

Please refer to NCMEC's "true stories" page for cases and news that may be from your state.

### **3. Where do children receive sexual solicitations on the Internet?**

Children reported that they receive sexual solicitations in chatrooms, while using Instant Messenger (IM), on E-mail, in game rooms, and on message boards.

### **4. My 13-year-old son received an E-mail with an image of adult pornography, is this illegal?**

An incident such as this may be illegal. Please make a CyberTipline report at [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) and save the E-mail in which the image was attached. Please include the full E-mail address and "Header" information in your CyberTipline report.

### **5. How do online sexual predators find my child to start an online conversation and how do spammers find my child's email address?**

Some of the same methods are used for both spammers (people that you don't know that send you unwanted E-mail) and online sexual predators including:

**Member profiles and online white and yellow pages.** There are various web sites that allow users to create profiles and search for members with similar profiles. The white and yellow pages contain addresses from various sources that often share contacts. For example one service provider will add E-mail addresses to a major E-mail address search engine by default, making new addresses available to the public.

**Chatrooms.** Spammers and sexual predators harvest names from chatrooms, as it allows them to "target" their mailing lists. To target kids, sexual predators will go where the kids are. Examples of such places are game rooms, kid-friendly sites, and teen-support sites.

**Surfer's web browser.** Some sites use various tricks to extract a web searcher's E-mail address from the web browser, sometimes without the searcher noticing it. One example of this is making the browser fetch one of the page's images through an anonymous connection to the site. In order to access the page, some browsers give the E-mail address the user has configured into the browser as the password for that account.

**Chain letters and hoaxes.** This method means the spammer or sexual predator uses a hoax to convince people to give him or her valid E-mail addresses. For example some use chain letters with promises of free gifts to you and anyone the letter is forwarded to as long as it is copied to the person who started the chain letter. They often claim to be associated with large reputable businesses.

**There are legitimate Internet resources that can be misused.**

Once someone has your E-mail address there are legitimate Internet resources that can be misused to find additional information about you.

For instance by inputting an E-mail address and conducting a "reverse lookup" on a people-finder, someone can find your full name, home address, and telephone number. With that information people can use a mapping tool on the Internet to determine where you live and exactly how to get to your house.

In addition they can conduct web and newsgroup searches to see if you have a web site, are on a web site, or have posted any messages to newsgroups. In essence, within one hour, someone may be able to find such information as your name, home and business addresses, home and business telephone numbers, preferences and hobbies, and even information about your family and neighbors<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from "How Do Spammers and Online Stalkers Find You?" in *The Front Line*, August 2001, Volume XXXIV, page 8-9. Copyright © 2001 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved.

**6. What happens to my CyberTipline report after I submit it to NCMEC?**

Every report is analyzed by staff members in the Exploited Child Unit and provided to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and/or state/local law enforcement when such jurisdiction can be determined. Each of the agencies can review the reports and determine if further action is needed. Reports are also forwarded to Internet Service Providers, as appropriate.

**7. Does NCMEC investigate my CyberTipline report?**

NCMEC is not a law-enforcement agency and does not have the authority to investigate and arrest perpetrators.

As indicated in the previous question, however, each report will be analyzed by staff members in the Exploited Child Unit and provided to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and/or state local law enforcement for their review and to determine if further action is needed.

**8. Will I be contacted about the outcome of my CyberTipline report?**

Reporting persons are not contacted regarding the final outcome of reports. If a reporting person desires to be updated about the status of a report, it is advised that law enforcement be contacted directly as the NCMEC's Exploited Children Unit does not handle the reports beyond initial intake and analysis.

Persons reporting unsolicited E-mail or pornographic images of children will only be contacted if additional information is needed. Reporting persons are often contacted about other incident types to verify information provided, such as in a case of reported extrafamilial sexual exploitation, and explain what the reporting person's next steps should be, especially in a situation where there is potential or immediate risk to a child.

Thus it is always a good idea to include your contact information in the CyberTipline report. Please leave your name, your home and work telephone number, the time you would like to be contacted, and an E-mail address.