



OJJDP

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JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Protecting Children in Cyberspace: The ICAC Task Force Program

by Michael Medaris and Cathy Girouard

With remarkable foresight, William Gibson, in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, predicted that society's increasing reliance on computers and information technology would create an electronic virtual universe that he called Cyberspace. Seventeen years later, cyberspace has become much more than a premise in a science fiction novel—it is the equivalent of a gold-rush boomtown. Every second, six new people sign on to the Internet, which, with astonishing speed, has become commonplace in daily life and increasingly vital to learning and communication.

Not surprisingly, youth constitute one of the fastest growing Internet populations. In cyberspace, young people are a mouse-click away from exploring America's greatest museums, libraries, and universities. Encouraged by parents and teachers to take advantage of the Internet's incredible educational and recreational opportunities, nearly 30 million children and youth go online each year to research homework assignments and to learn about the world they live in. Youth also use the Internet to play games and meet friends. According to a survey conducted by *Family PC Magazine* (Johnson, 2001), youth ages 12–17 are spending a substantial amount of time on the Internet: 66 percent spend 1–5 hours each week surfing the Web, 79 percent spend 1–5 hours e-mailing, and 75 percent spend 1–5 hours doing homework

or research online. A United Kingdom survey (NOP Research Group, Internet Surveys, United Kingdom, June 24, 1999) found that teenagers and children hold Internet users in high social esteem. Both youth who used the Internet and those who did not described Internet users as “clever,” “friendly,” “cool,” and “trendy.” Given the growing reliance on the Internet for commerce, information, and personal fulfillment, it will probably continue to be an important factor in how children learn and grow. Indeed, some educators believe that children who become familiar with online technology while growing up will lead fuller lives and compete more successfully for careers in the Information Age.

A more sinister aspect of Gibson's premise has alarming implications for parents, educators, and law enforcement. Gibson's concept of cyberspace contains dark corners and back alleys where criminal activity flourishes and electronic actions can entail physical repercussions. In the Internet of today, the electronic actions of the unwary and vulnerable can lead to stalking, theft, and other malicious or criminal actions. In the worst instances, children and teenagers can become victims of molestation by providing personal information and developing relationships with offenders who lure them from their homes for sexual purposes.

A Message From OJJDP

Children have embraced the Internet with remarkable alacrity, as they go online to learn, play, and communicate with their friends. The Internet clearly influences how a growing number of children discover and interact with the world around them.

Unfortunately, cyberspace is not always a safe place for youngsters to visit. Some sex offenders use the privacy and anonymity of the Internet to prey on vulnerable children and teenagers, whose Internet access is often unsupervised. In exchanging child pornography or seeking victims online, sex offenders may face little risk of interdiction of their criminal activities.

To combat computer-facilitated sex crimes, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funds the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program, which protects children in cyberspace.

Although apprehending sex offenders who use the Internet to facilitate their crimes presents significant challenges, the ICAC Program can help State and local law enforcement agencies to develop an effective response to online enticement and child pornography cases. Included in this response are community education, forensic, investigative, and victim service components.

We encourage parents, policymakers, and practitioners to use the information provided by this Bulletin to help create an Internet environment in which children can safely play, learn, and grow.

This Bulletin discusses the emerging online threat to children and teenagers and the efforts of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program. The ICAC Program is designed to enhance the response of State and local law enforcement to child pornography and enticement offenses.

Background

Large numbers of young people are encountering unwanted sexual solicitations that, in the most serious cases, involve being targeted by offenders seeking children for sex. Research conducted by the University of New Hampshire and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) disclosed that one in five children ages 10–17 received a sexual solicitation over the Internet in the past year (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak, 2000). One in thirty-three received an aggressive solicitation—that is, the solicitor asked to meet them somewhere, called them on the telephone, or sent them regular mail, money, or gifts.

Unfortunately, the Internet is a nearly perfect medium for offenders seeking children for sex. It provides privacy, anonymity, and a virtually unlimited pool of unsupervised children and teenagers who may be susceptible to manipulation. Cloaked in the anonymity of cyberspace, sex offenders can capitalize on the natural curiosity of children, seeking victims with little risk of interdiction. These offenders no longer need to lurk in parks and malls. Instead, they roam from chatroom to chatroom looking for vulnerable, susceptible children.

Today's Internet is also rapidly becoming the marketplace for offenders seeking to acquire material for their child pornography collections. More insidious than the exchange of sexually explicit material among adults, child pornography often depicts the sexual assault of a child and is often used by child molesters to recruit, seduce, and control their victims. Although not all molesters collect pornography and not all child pornography collectors molest children, significant consensus exists among law enforcement officers about the role pornography plays in recruiting and controlling new victims. Pornography is used to break down inhibitions and validate sex between children and adults as normal, and it enables the

offender to have power over the victim throughout the molestation. When the offender loses interest, pictures of the victim are often used as blackmail to ensure the child's silence, and when these pictures are posted on the Internet, they become an enduring and irretrievable record of the victimization and a relentless, shame-inducing violation of that child's privacy.

The debate about the role child pornography plays in triggering actual victimization continues. Many in the law enforcement community believe that the validation and nearly constant stimulation afforded to sex offenders by the Internet put minors at greater risk for sexual exploitation. By creating a demand for new material, the Internet also creates a demand for more victims, and it may cause some individuals

Incidence Rates of Sexual Offending Involving Contact Crimes

In 1990, the Federal Bureau of Prisons established the Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP) at the Federal Correctional Institution in Butner, NC. This voluntary program, in which participants do not receive special privileges or reductions in their sentences, uses a variety of cognitive-behavioral and relapse prevention techniques for male sex offenders, of whom the majority are Internet offenders.

In the interest of examining incidence rates of sexual offending involving contact crimes (e.g., child sexual abuse, rape), the Federal Bureau of Prisons conducted a study of participants in the SOTP program, including inmates who were convicted of offenses involving child pornography but who had not been convicted of sexual contact offenses. Inmates were classified into three categories, depending on their offense:

- ◆ Child Pornographer/Traveler: 62 inmates convicted of an array of child pornography offenses, including the luring of a child and traveling across State lines with the intention of committing child sexual abuse.
- ◆ Contact Sex Offender: 24 inmates convicted of sexual molestation, abuse, or assault of a child or an adult.
- ◆ Other: Four inmates convicted of nonsexual crimes, such as bank robbery or drug trafficking.

Information from Presentence Investigation (PSI) Reports was examined and data were extracted on the documented number of sexual contact crimes the perpetrator was known to have committed before entering SOTP. Additional information was gathered on the number of offenses involving any type of sexual contact crime against a child or adult that the perpetrators subsequently self-reported over the course of participation in SOTP but that were not documented in PSIs. Although the study revealed that all three groups disclosed sexual contact offenses in addition to those documented in their PSIs, further examination of the data unexpectedly revealed that after participation in the program, inmates in the Child Pornographer/Traveler and Other groups disclosed an inordinate number of previously undocumented sexual contact offenses involving children and adults. Surprisingly, offenders in the Child Pornographer/Traveler group (excluding 15 participants who divulged no additional sex contact crimes) committed the highest number of sexual contact offenses, with a rate of 30.5 victims per offender. The Other group averaged 15.5 victims per offender, while the Contact Sex Offender group averaged 9.6 victims per offender.

Number of Offenses	Child Pornographer/ Traveler (n=62)	Contact Sex Offender (n=24)	Other (n=4)
Based on PSIs	55	49	2
After SOTP	1,434	232	62

Source: Self-reported contact sexual offenses by participants in the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Sex Offender Treatment Program: Implications for Internet sex offenders, by Andres E. Hernandez, Psy.D., Director, Sex Offender Treatment Program, Federal Bureau of Prisons, FCI Butner, P.O. Box 1000, Butner, NC 27509. Presented at the 19th Research and Treatment Conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, San Diego, CA, November 2000.

to move from voyeuristic activities to acting out their fantasies with live victims. In fact, findings from a recent Federal Bureau of Prisons research project (see sidebar on “Incidence Rates of Sexual Offending Involving Contact Crimes”) appear to indicate that the number of sexual contact victims per sex offender may be grossly underestimated and that these offenders may be more physically active than suggested by the perceived passiveness of trading or possessing child pornography (Hernandez, 2000).

The Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program

The increasing number of children and teenagers using the Internet, the proliferation of child pornography, and the heightened activity by predators searching for unsupervised contact with underage victims present both a significant threat to the health and safety of young people and a formidable challenge for law enforcement. Recognizing this challenge, OJJDP created the ICAC Task Force Program under the authority of the fiscal year (FY) 1998 Justice Appropriations Act, Public Law 105-119, and continued funding the program with successive appropriations in FYs 1999, 2000, and 2001. The purpose of the ICAC Program is to help State and local law enforcement agencies develop an effective response to cyberenticement and child pornography cases that encompasses forensic and investigative components, training and technical assistance, victim services, and community education. As of September 2001, 30 regional task forces (see figure 1, page 4) and 43 investigative satellites (see sidebar, page 5), involving the efforts of 160 State and local law enforcement agencies in 39 States, are participating in the program.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Under a separate appropriation, NCMEC supports the ICAC Task Force Program with a wide range of activities to protect children in cyberspace. The CyberTipline, a one-stop reporting point for citizens concerned about suspicious activity on the Internet, is designed to provide pertinent lead information to Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies for investigative followup. The CyberTipline, which began operation in March 1998, has received more than 40,000 reports

regarding the sexual exploitation of children (see figure 2, page 5). Currently, more than 9 out of 10 reports to NCMEC are entered online at www.cybertipline.com, where specially trained analysts review and verify the information prior to forwarding it to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Many of these reports have launched successful investigations through which offenders have been arrested and victims rescued. CyberTipline II, an enhanced CyberTipline, is up and running as a result of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) Mandatory Reporting Law, 42 U.S.C. § 13032(b)(1), which requires ISPs to report any apparent child pornography to NCMEC. CyberTipline II can handle a much higher volume of online traffic than CyberTipline and can accept information such as photographs, videos, and other materials involving children that appear to be sexually explicit. Law enforcement agencies can now view these materials immediately upon receipt of a CyberTipline II report.

NCMEC also offers two courses for law enforcement agencies interested in improving their response to online crimes

against children. The week-long Protecting Children Online (PCO) course features modules pertaining to investigative techniques, interview strategies, and offender behavioral characteristics and provides important information about additional Federal resources that are available to assist officers investigating cases of child pornography and online enticement. The Protecting Children Online—Unit Commander (PCO UC) course focuses on managers and executives from law enforcement agencies who are interested in improving their response to these offenses. Held monthly at NCMEC, the 2½-day course discusses liability issues and provides model policies and procedures to encourage agencies to develop a comprehensive response for their community.

Regional ICAC Task Forces

Regional task forces throughout the country are designed to provide forensic, prevention, and investigation assistance to parents, educators, prosecutors, law enforcement, and those professionals working on child victimization issues. OJJDP provides funds for personnel, training,

ICAC Task Force Program in Action

- ◆ A citizen contacts NCMEC's CyberTipline to report that an adult male is using the Internet to locate minors for sex. CyberTipline analysts forward the information to ICAC Task Force officers, who begin an inquiry into the subject's online activities. The subject forwards nude photographs as he schedules a meeting with the undercover officers. Upon arresting the offender, the officers learn that he had previously victimized four children who were ages 8–11.
- ◆ A middle-aged male sends child pornographic photos and a video to an undercover officer posing as a 13-year-old boy. He invites the “boy” to his house to watch some other child pornographic videos and later admits his sexual intent. A search of his home reveals more than 1,000 pornographic videotapes (many of them containing child pornography), hundreds of photographs of child pornography, and numerous magazines and calendars depicting children in sexually explicit positions.
- ◆ Task Force members execute a search warrant at the residence of a registered sex offender and seize his computer. An examination of the computer locates three additional victims living more than 2,500 miles away whom the suspect had abused for years.
- ◆ A Task Force undercover operation results in the arrest of a middle-aged man after he drives nearly 1,000 miles to meet a 14-year-old girl for sex. Following his arrest, the officers seize an axe handle, shovel, and several gallons of gasoline from the trunk of his car. The suspect's house includes a dungeon outfitted with torture instruments and an extensive collection of serial killer videotapes.
- ◆ Parents notify Task Force investigators of their concerns about a chatroom relationship their 14-year-old son has developed with a stranger. Officers assume the boy's online identity and, within 2 days, the suspect makes arrangements for a sexual encounter with the boy.

Agencies Currently Participating in the Investigative Satellite Initiative

For contact information, visit the ICAC Task Force Web site at www.search.org/training/icac/units.asp.

Arkansas

Homer Police Department

California

San Francisco Police Department
Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office
Vacaville Police Department
Walnut Creek Police Department

Colorado

Douglas County Sheriff's Office

Connecticut

Milford Police Department

Florida

Seminole County Sheriff's Office

Illinois

Chicago Police Department

Indiana

Indiana State Police

Louisiana

Gonzales Police Department
New Orleans Police Department

Massachusetts

Berkshire Office of the District Attorney

Boston Police Department

Northwest Massachusetts Office of the District Attorney

Michigan

Glendale Police Department
Saginaw County Sheriff's Office

Minnesota

Hutchinson Police Department

Missouri

State Technical Assistance Team

Nevada

Washoe County Sheriff's Office

New Hampshire

New London Police Department

New Jersey

New Jersey State Police
Ocean County Prosecutor's Office

New Mexico

Office of the Attorney General

New York

Bronx County District Attorney
Colonie Police Department
Clarkstown Police Department

Erie County Sheriff's Office

Rockland County Sheriff's Office
Ulster County Sheriff's Office

North Dakota

Office of the Attorney General

South Dakota

Pennington Sheriff's Office

Texas

Austin Police Department
Bexar County Sheriff's Department
Corpus Christi Police Department
Garland Police Department

Virginia

Albemarle County Sheriff's Office
Fairfax Police Department

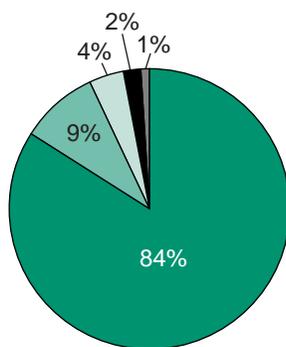
Washington

Kennewick Police Department
Office of the Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney
Spokane Police Department
Washington State Patrol

Wisconsin

Oconomowoc Police Department

Figure 2: CyberTipline Citizen Reports, July 1, 1998, to June 30, 2001



Total Reports: 44,303

- Child pornography ($n=37,192$)
- Online enticement ($n=4,026$)
- Child sexual molestation ($n=1,880$)
- Child prostitution ($n=779$)
- Child sex tourism ($n=426$)

ICAC Task Force Board of Directors

Activities of the regional task forces and investigative satellites are coordinated by the ICAC Task Force Board of Directors. Composed of law enforcement managers and prosecutors appointed by agencies participating in the regional task force program, the Board meets quarterly and plays a very important role in reviewing enforcement proposals, formulating policy recommendations, and assessing training and technical assistance needs for OJJDP. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Customs Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and NCMEC serve as technical advisors, and the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) provides counsel as legal advisor.

ICAC Task Force Training and Technical Assistance Program

SEARCH Group, Inc., of Sacramento, CA, conducts a wide range of training and technical assistance activities for OJJDP that build on the NCMEC PCO curriculum.

Using a mobile computer laboratory, SEARCH Group, Inc., offers the Investigation of Online Child Exploitation course on a regional basis throughout the country. Featuring a hands-on training environment, this week-long course provides frontline personnel with information about advanced investigative strategies for responding to child pornography and cyberenticement cases. As of summer 2001, SEARCH Group, Inc., also offers Media Management, a course that is designed to enable investigators to pinpoint the location of evidence on electronic media.

Challenges of Cyberspace Policing

Over the past 2 years, agencies participating in the ICAC Task Force Program have accomplished the following (statistics submitted by ICAC Task Force members for the March 2001 Monthly Performance Measures Report):

- ◆ Arrested more than 550 individuals for child sexual exploitation offenses.
- ◆ Seized approximately 850 computers.

- ◆ Served 627 search warrants and 1,338 subpoenas.
- ◆ Conducted forensic examinations of more than 1,500 computers for task force investigations and other law enforcement agencies.
- ◆ Provided direct investigative assistance in more than 1,000 cases at the request of other law enforcement agencies.
- ◆ Provided advice in 1,622 instances to other law enforcement agencies.
- ◆ Provided training for more than 1,443 prosecutors and 12,500 law enforcement officers.
- ◆ Reached thousands of children, teenagers, parents, educators, and other individuals through publications,

presentations, and public service announcements about safe Internet practices for young people.

Based on these statistics and the experience of administering the ICAC Task Force Program over the past 2 years, OJJDP makes the following observations:

- ◆ Although awareness appears to be growing, many children, teenagers, and parents are not sufficiently informed about the dangers and possible repercussions of releasing personal information to or agreeing to meet individuals encountered online. In one instance, it took just 45 minutes for a task force officer (posing as a teenager) to arrange a meeting with a 13-year-old girl living in his jurisdiction. She returned home

after the officer spoke with her and her parents about safe online practices.

- ◆ Awareness of the CyberTipline needs to be increased. There have been several task force cases in which suspects went on to victimize other minors after being warned off by a vigilant parent who was not aware of the CyberTipline.
- ◆ The Internet challenges traditional thinking about law enforcement jurisdiction and renders city, county, and State boundaries virtually meaningless. Nearly all (95 percent) ICAC Task Force investigations involve substantial communication and coordination between Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. Toward this end, in a major achievement of the program, OJJDP developed the ICAC Task Force Program Standards (hereafter "Standards") to facilitate interagency referrals of child pornography and cyberentertainment cases. Developed through a process that combined the perspectives of prosecutors, investigators, and law enforcement executives from Federal, State, and local agencies, the Standards address investigative techniques, evidence collection, prevention efforts, media relations, and management practices.
- ◆ Most investigations are initiated in response to a citizen complaint rather than undercover operations in which officers pose as minors in chatrooms. This finding dispels the belief that these cases are usually manufactured by undercover officers. Another reality is that these cases often involve multiple victims.
- ◆ The Internet places new demands on forensic resources. Computers are piling up in evidence rooms across the country because the existing forensic capacity is inadequate to meet the needs of investigative efforts.
- ◆ A generation ago, officers beginning their law enforcement careers would be issued a uniform, service weapon, and notebook. Those items rarely changed during a 20-year career. Today, changes in equipment and software occur seemingly overnight, and officers are hard pressed to stay current not only with technological changes, but also with a motivated offender community eagerly adapting new advances to exploit children. OJJDP sponsors an annual ICAC conference where investigators and managers can learn about

Bedford County Sheriff's Office Virginia
Broward County Sheriff's Office Florida
Colorado Springs Police Department Colorado
Dallas Police Department Texas
Illinois State Police
New York Division of Criminal Justice Service
Portsmouth Police Department New Hampshire
Sacramento County Sheriff's Office California
South Carolina Office of the Attorney General
Wisconsin Department of Justice
 AND THE
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

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ICAC TASK FORCE PROGRAM STANDARDS

"Protecting Children in Cyberspace"

emerging trends and changes in technology that affect their investigations.

Conclusion

If children are to thrive in today's world and compete in tomorrow's workplace, they must be able to safely play, learn, and grow in cyberspace. Challenges exist, but the work of the ICAC Task Force Program and its Federal agency partners is a vital step in protecting children in the Information Age.

For Further Information

To obtain further information about the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, contact:

Ron Laney
Director
Child Protection Division
Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention
810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531
202-616-3637
202-353-9093 (fax)
laney@ojp.usdoj.gov

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810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531
202-353-9244
202-353-9093 (fax)
girouard@ojp.usdoj.gov

Additional Resources

Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section Criminal Division

U.S. Department of Justice
1331 F Street NW., Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20004
202-514-5780
202-514-1793 (fax)
202-305-4320 (fax)

The Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) of the Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, has supervisory responsibility for Federal statutes covering obscenity, child exploitation, child sexual abuse, activities under the Mann Act, sex tourism, missing and abducted children, and child support recovery. Created in 1987, CEOS is a specialized section composed of attorneys with broad expertise in prosecuting obscenity,

child exploitation, and child abuse. CEOS's jurisdiction is limited to the enforcement of Federal statutes. Section attorneys work with U.S. Attorneys on child services. They also provide training, both domestically and internationally, for prosecutors, judges, attorneys, law enforcement agencies, and victim services systems. CEOS attorneys advise task forces on missing and abducted children, child abuse, sex offender recidivism and registration, and youth placement. CEOS works with victim-witness offices of the U.S. Attorney's offices.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Innocent Images National Initiative
Baltimore Division
11700 Beltsville Drive
Calverton, MD 20705
301-586-4519 (8 a.m.-4 p.m.)
301-586-4500 (noon-4 p.m.)
www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/balt/major.htm

Innocent Images National Initiative identifies and develops prosecutable cases against individuals who use bulletin board systems to victimize children. FBI agents and task force officers, who pose as young children or sexual predators, go online to investigate those individuals who recruit minors into illicit sexual relationships, electronically distribute pornographic images of children, or post illegal images on the Internet. Additionally, the FBI has special agents serving as Crimes Against Children Coordinators. These agents receive special training and are able to access FBI resources to assist local law enforcement.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Charles B. Wang International Children's
Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3175
800-THE-LOST (800-843-5678)
703-274-3900
www.missingkids.org
www.missingkids.com/cybertip
(CyberTipline)

A clearinghouse of information on missing and exploited children, NCMEC operates a 24-hour hotline and child pornography tipline and provides a wide range of free services, including technical case assistance, link and pattern analysis on cases, forensic assistance, training programs, and educational material and publications. NCMEC also offers the CyberTipline (see page 3). Parents or children can file a report by completing and submitting an online form that is reviewed by an Exploited Child Unit information analyst

and submitted to law enforcement, including the FBI, the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

U.S. Customs Service Cyber Smuggling Center

11320 Random Hills Road, Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-293-8005
www.customs.treas.gov

The Cyber Smuggling Center's main focus is to patrol the Internet for signs of the illegal importation and proliferation of child pornography or of the sexual exploitation of children. The center conducts all Internet investigations from a central location. The U.S. Customs Service also maintains child exploitation coordinators in its regional offices who may be contacted for assistance in these types of investigations.

U.S. Postal Inspection Service

475 L'Enfant Plaza West SW.
Washington, DC 20260
202-268-4286
www.usps.com/postalinspectors

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, often working with agencies such as CEOS and NCMEC, conducts undercover operations to investigate individuals who use the Internet or a bulletin board service to exchange pornography or who correspond with others who do the same. In some undercover operations, postal inspectors contact suspects via computer networks and the Internet. Individuals who use the U.S. mail for the actual exchange of material or for initial contact are subject to investigation and prosecution.

SEARCH Group, Inc.

7311 Greenhaven Drive, Suite 145
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-392-2550
www.search.org

SEARCH Group, Inc., is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the criminal justice system through better information management and the effective application of information and identification technology. Located in Sacramento, CA, SEARCH Group, Inc., offers several training courses to assist law enforcement officers to effectively respond to online crimes against children.

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Washington, DC 20531

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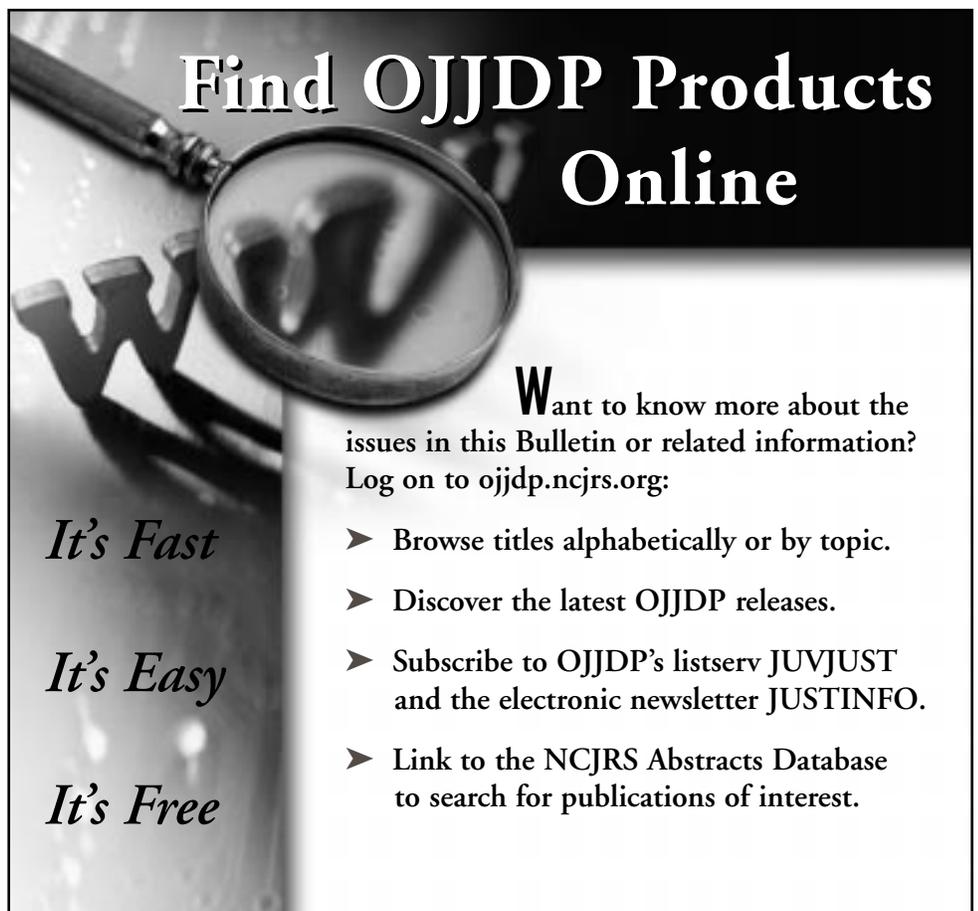
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This Bulletin was prepared by Michael Medaris, Senior Program Manager of OJJDP's Child Protection Division, and Cathy Girouard, Program Manager of OJJDP's Child Protection Division.

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