

Partnerships

The modern world's technological advances have contributed to an increase in the scale, complexity, and danger of threats to children, but those same advances can be harnessed to combat and prevent child exploitation. Innovative solutions that prioritize collaboration, information sharing, and responsiveness are needed to update and enhance the nation's approach to combating child exploitation.

The government alone cannot solve these complex challenges. Federal agencies must not only partner with each other, but also with state, local, and Tribal jurisdictions, and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community leaders and organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, and survivors. Working together, this network can share each partner's capabilities and insights to address child exploitation, multiplying the collective impact and building more effective policies and programs.

Although partnerships among various groups currently exist, there is no unified collaboration or outreach strategy. Existing collaborations, partnerships, and initiatives, while highly successful in some areas, are sometimes focused on enforcement or specific facets of child exploitation rather than on a comprehensive approach. Best practices from these existing partnerships, where they exist, are not always shared broadly.

An effective partnership strategy can extend and sustain the government's impact, inform policy, and align resources to prevent and interdict child exploitation. As shown during the COVID-19 pandemic, technology can enable effective communication and collaboration across jurisdictions. Maximizing the power of partnerships is more critical – and more possible – than ever before.

Fragmented Communication & Information Sharing

Many entities are involved in preventing and combating child exploitation, including federal agencies¹, state, local, and Tribal policy makers, social services, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, survivor organizations, private industry, academia, schools, hospitals and healthcare providers, and more. Establishing communication channels and processes across varied agencies and organizations is extremely challenging. Fragmented communication results in duplicated efforts and inefficient use of time and resources. Amid a rising volume of child exploitation reports year after year², law enforcement and victim services resources are spread thin, making critical the effective collective use of time, expertise, data, and funding.

Many entities do not know where to find subject matter experts, what resources are available, or who to contact for a specific problem or case. Community mapping of the available services and the roles and responsibilities of various organizations, allows agencies and organizations to leverage resources available at the local, state, and federal level, or to form the partnerships necessary to fill gaps. This is particularly challenging in time-sensitive or emergency situations.

¹ To see all the various federal agencies involved in combating child exploitation, please see the Government Agencies Involved in Combating Child Exploitation appendix.

² <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline>. For more information, please see the Unique Resource and Enforcement chapter.

For example, when a child's needs require immediate attention, a trauma-informed service provider must be quickly identified and available to support the exploited child.

Not every law enforcement agency has extensive experience working child sexual exploitation cases. Agencies that do not have the expertise need to know who to contact when unusual or complex situations arise. Turnover within an agency or task force adds to the challenge of connecting with the appropriate personnel. Unfortunately, the heavy workload of those working to combat child exploitation leaves little time to develop and maintain relationships that can continue beyond an individual employee's tenure.

Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces: By the Numbers

Since the ICAC Task Force Program's inception in 1998:

- **61** ICAC Task Forces currently make up the ICAC Task Force Program
- **4,700+** Law Enforcement Agencies and prosecutorial agencies are affiliated with the ICAC Program
- **807,000+** program members have been trained
- **1,300,000+** Complaints of child sexual victimization have been received
- **118,000+** Individuals have been arrested because of the complaints reviewed

Partnership and collaboration thrive in areas where existing relationships are strong, or where a central contact serves as a coordinator to connect the relevant parties. This is a strength of the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces. The ICAC Task Force Program is a national network of 61 coordinated task forces, representing over 4,700 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies dedicated to investigating, prosecuting, and developing effective responses to internet crimes against children.³ The ICAC Task Forces receive grant funding through the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. By creating regional or state task forces specifically focused on online child exploitation cases, ICAC task forces create a streamlined approach to communication and bridge gaps across the network of partners that ICAC members already work with. All ICAC Task Force commanders convene three times a year, bolstering relationships and knowledge sharing across geographic boundaries. These relationships and pooled resources are critical in the face of rising reports of child exploitation crimes, increasingly sophisticated methods of offending and evading detection, and limited investigatory resources.⁴

In many states it may make sense for each county to have one point of contact for child exploitation cases. Those designated individuals, chosen for their knowledge about handling child exploitation cases, would be members of an affiliate network, which facilitates easy transfers of intelligence across counties and ensures case referrals are pursued and handled appropriately.

³ For more information, please see the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces Review appendix.

⁴ More information about limited investigatory resources can be found in the Wellness Challenges for Law Enforcement Personnel chapter.

Multidisciplinary task forces/collaborations are models for streamlined communication. They foster communication and networking among diverse agencies and organizations that expedite the sharing of expertise and information. Multidisciplinary collaborations that include all those who might encounter sexually exploited or at-risk youth enable communication and cooperation among agencies, individuals, and systems that might not otherwise talk to each other. In addition to law enforcement these may include child welfare workers, health care providers, survivor organizations, tribal organizations, advocacy organizations, service providers and others. These broad partnerships often include case-specific multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), like those common in health care settings, that help with deconfliction and prevent conflict and confusion over the progress of a case and survivor care.

What is a Multidisciplinary Task Force or Collaboration?

Multidisciplinary task forces and collaborations bring together partners from various disciplines. They operate differently in different jurisdictions and may include partners who convene and/or staff case-specific multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) may play a critical role in these collaborations. CACs are community-based, child-friendly, multidisciplinary services for children and families affected by sexual abuse or severe physical abuse.⁵ CACs bring together, often in one location, child protective services investigators, law enforcement, prosecutors, and medical and mental health professionals to provide a coordinated, comprehensive response to victims and their caregivers.

The King County, Washington Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Task Force is an example of a multidisciplinary collaboration. Originally convened by the court, its broad-based network includes the court, prosecutors, survivors, federal and state law enforcement (including the local ICAC lead), tribes and tribal organizations, survivors, defense attorneys, a military advocate, public health, schools, service providers, child welfare, a multitude of nonprofit organizations, and others. There are two kinds of case-specific MDTs operated by the Task Force, both led by the Child Advocacy Center, Children's Justice Center King County (CAC CJCKC). One is a weekly child sexual abuse case review, and the other is a standing monthly meeting. However, most MDT meetings are ad hoc, because they are time critical and are often pulled together overnight to respond quickly to an issue. The MDTs vary with each case, depending on a child's needs. The full Task Force meets quarterly, with time set aside for networking to enhance relationships across fields.

Federal agencies tend to be based in urban locations, where relationship building is relatively easy. In rural areas, federal agencies may have less frequent contact with local law enforcement, so federal and state or local agencies are less likely to be connected. Due to the variation in laws and procedures from state to state and county to county, successful partnership models that work well in one jurisdiction may not work elsewhere. These differences may limit the effectiveness of partnerships across jurisdictions. Guidance for how to partner with agencies across levels of government would help fill these gaps.

⁵ <https://www.nationalcac.org/history/>

Engaging Survivors

No one knows the landscape of sexual exploitation, including child exploitation, better than survivors – those with lived experience. Including survivors in establishing partnerships significantly enhances preventative and investigative efforts. Survivor involvement can improve investigations, encourage victim disclosure, and mobilize other parties to actively engage in combating child exploitation.

Survivors can help law enforcement and others better understand the means and methods used by offenders to target, groom, and abuse their victims and the horrific impacts of the trauma they suffer. No survivors should be asked to use their voices in the public sphere because for many, every restatement of their abuse is another triggering trauma. Some, however, choose to share their stories, which may encourage other victims to seek help, or act as peer mentors to support others. Third, survivors play an integral role in communicating the need for a dedicated focus on prevention efforts.

The Phoenix 11 is a group of survivors whose child sexual abuse was recorded and, in most cases, distributed online. These 11 survivors, with the help of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (C3P) and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), have banded together to use their collective voice to challenge inadequate responses to the prevalence of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) on the internet. When the public, corporations, agencies, and organizations learn about the ongoing, often lifelong trauma caused by continuing online circulation of images and videos depicting abuse, they are more likely to act to support efforts to prevent it. Internet service providers who make it difficult to detect and prosecute offenders and remove the content from continued circulation, enable both the abuse and the trauma.⁶

Survivors are increasingly involved in both multidisciplinary collaborations and the development of policies that combat child exploitation. The Violence Against Women Act, as amended, authorizes grant programs that provide federal funding to victim service organizations serving victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and in some programs, sex trafficking; many of these organizations founded and run by survivors.⁷ In addition to providing victim services, these organizations may refer cases to law enforcement after a victim discloses details of their abuse because their personnel are mandatory reporters under state law. Several non-profit anti-trafficking organizations and coalitions working to combat both labor and sex trafficking, offer resources, training, and technical assistance for organizations that wish to employ and engage survivors. Government agencies and other partner organizations should be trained on how best to include survivors and avoid compounding their trauma. Above all, survivors must be respected as experts in the field and given the opportunity to serve in professional capacities. This includes compensating survivors for their insights and their work, like that of any other paid consultant or employee.

⁶ More information about how technology enables child exploitation can be found in the Technology chapter.

⁷ <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/grant-programs>

Non-Traditional Partnerships

While improving partnerships within governmental, prosecutorial, and law enforcement agencies is important, these agencies must also look outside the public sector for partnership opportunities. Such opportunities abound.

The Education System

Addressing Child Exploitation through Education

California: In 2017, California passed the Human Trafficking Prevention Education and Training Act, which requires comprehensive sexual health education for children in grades 7-12, including information on sexual assault and trafficking.⁸

Florida: In 2019, Florida became the first state to require that all K-12 educators receive training and educational resources about preventing human trafficking in schools.⁹

New Jersey: Also in 2019, New Jersey enacted legislation directing the creation of child trafficking and exploitation guidelines and awareness training in all public schools.¹⁰

Virginia: In 2017, Virginia required its state Department of Education to formalize guidelines for training educators on the prevention of child trafficking. Those guidelines were issued the following year.¹¹

Teachers, school counselors, nurses, and other school staff are important allies in the fight against child exploitation. However, there are few formal alliances. While outreach may exist within a jurisdiction, such as between a local school district and the region's ICAC or other task force, widespread partnership at the state and federal level is lacking. A framework should be established to foster alliances at the state and local level that include those who see children every day in school. To support this effort, there is a high need to clearly identify existing and potential roles of each partner to avoid confusion and to enhance meaningful, results-oriented collaboration. The Department of Education (ED), via their Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS), administers, coordinates, and recommends policy as well as administers grant programs and technical assistance centers addressing the overall safety and health of school communities. Their work includes funding state and local activities designed to decrease the incidence of violence in schools, which may include sexual assaults. While ED can provide funding as appropriated by Congress, resources,¹² and recommendations in formalizing partnerships to address and prevent child exploitation in schools, it does not control state or local curricula.

Because of these limitations, individual school districts and state education agencies and boards have

⁸ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1227

⁹ <https://www.fl DOE.org/schools/healthy-schools/human-trafficking.stml>

¹⁰ <https://nj.gov/education/students/safety/health/ht/>

¹¹ <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/student-services/prevention-strategies-programs/human-trafficking>

¹² Resources from the Department of Education are available at <https://oese.ed.gov/resources/safe-school-environments/keeping-students-safe-online/>, specifically see Cyber Safety Quick Links for Protecting Youth: Empowering Students to Become Responsibly Digital Citizens and Engage Online Safely. The Office of Educational Technology also has a document entitled Building Technology Infrastructure for Learning, which

the most influence over teachers' training and any information shared with students. Unfortunately, creating and implementing a single model for partnerships is difficult as the nation's many school districts all have individualized practices, funding levels and priorities. Additionally, even in states or school districts where prevention curricula have been encouraged, or even mandated, teachers are often expected to integrate this work into their other responsibilities, with limited resources and time. Providing grant funding, guidelines, educational materials, and model trainings – developed in partnership with law enforcement, survivors, NGOs, and relevant social worker and service providers – can ease the burden on teachers and encourage greater adoption of and consistency in implementing these programs. Work is already underway at the Department of Health and Human Services to fill this gap.

Educational partnerships within education must focus on four audiences, each with a tailored approach and curriculum: school leadership, school staff, students, and parents/caregivers. The messaging should be focused on prevention and response. While these are challenging topics to discuss, especially with young children, children should be taught about healthy relationships, how to identify inappropriate behavior from adults and peers, and what to do when they believe a friend may not be safe. Survivors should be involved in curriculum development.

Examples include NetSmartz¹³, which is NCMEC's online safety education program, and the FBI's Safe Online Surfing content.¹⁴ Both provide age-appropriate videos and activities in both English and Spanish to help teach children be safer online with the goal of helping children to become more aware of potential online risks and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices on and offline.

Schools, parents, and caregivers must recognize that the threat of child exploitation is present wherever digital technology exists, whether on a school computer or a child's phone. Adults must recognize that the scary scenario is no longer the stranger in the park, but offenders that are often known to the victim and those with ready access to children in their homes or through their phones, computers, and gaming systems.

The Medical Community

Department of Health & Human Services SOAR Program

The Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) offers the SOAR to Health and Wellness training program,¹⁵ which is designed to educate health care providers, social workers, public health professionals, and behavioral health professionals on how to identify, treat, and respond appropriately to individuals who are at risk of or who have experienced trafficking. The SOAR trainings are developed in collaboration with subject matter experts in the field, including those with lived experiences, and partner organizations.

covers building technology infrastructure to support digital learning, including a section on safety, available at <https://tech.ed.gov/infrastructure/>.

¹³ <https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/home>

¹⁴ <https://sos.fbi.gov/en/>

¹⁵ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/training/soar-health-and-wellness-training>

To promote free online, accredited training, HHS provides SOAR *Online*, which includes both foundational (101) and advanced (201) anti-trafficking trainings, through the TRAIN Learning Management System. During FY 2022, HHS developed and launched the following SOAR *Online* training modules:

Working With Foreign National Minors Who Have Experienced Trafficking

- Explain common reasons minors may migrate to the United States.
- Identify tactics that individuals use to exploit foreign national minors.
- Differentiate common trends and potential red flags of trafficking between foreign national minors and U.S. citizens.
- Understand how to respond to concerns of trafficking among foreign national minors and connect them with federal services and resources.
- Share the importance of trafficking awareness and responsiveness with others in your work environment.

Responding to Human Trafficking Through the Child Welfare System

- Describe the intersection of human trafficking with child abuse and neglect.
- Summarize federal laws describing child welfare’s role in serving children and youth who have experienced human trafficking.
- Articulate the role of child welfare in responding to human trafficking.
- Identify key areas of the child welfare response to human trafficking.
- Determine ways to partner with child welfare in serving children and youth who have experienced human trafficking.

Child abuse and exploitation are a public health problem. The medical community must be involved in identifying and responding to child trauma and exploitation. All medical professionals should be trained on how to identify signs of trauma, and where identified, must have the training to find out the source of the trauma. Law enforcement should participate in local collaborations that include medical professionals, so that trusting relationships are developed. Partnerships among law enforcement agencies and major medical professional associations, such as the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Board of Emergency Medicine, and the American Academy of Nursing, should be explored and strengthened. Training should include all types of medical professionals: pediatricians, hospital-based doctors, school nurses, first responders, and others who encounter children. Training should include physical trauma and abuse, and all forms of child exploitation including sex trafficking and online production of CSAM.

The target audience of HHS’s SOAR to Health and Wellness training program includes physicians, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, registered nurses, dentists, psychologists, social workers, case managers, school counselors, public health professionals, health education specialists, and allied health professionals. By applying a public health approach, SOAR seeks to build the capacity of communities to identify and respond to the complex needs of individuals who have experienced trafficking and understand the root causes that make individuals, families, and communities vulnerable to trafficking.

“What has been incredibly important as a provider and part of the Family Advocacy Outreach Network is the ongoing training NCMEC provides me. Their materials are so valuable and unique. It’s helped a great deal because what I’m really doing is crisis intervention. That training has proven invaluable as new cases come into my school and practice. The training that NCMEC offers is first class quality training that no one else offers. It’s such a specialty, this training is not available anywhere else. It’s such an eye opener into another world that no one really likes to talk about.”

– NCMEC, Family Advocacy Outreach Network provider

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has also created another opportunity for medical professionals to provide support for child sexual abuse victims via their Family Advocacy Outreach Network (FAON), a voluntary network connecting victims and families with mental health service providers and other organizations within their communities. FAON leverages the expertise of experienced treatment professionals and service organizations who are willing to provide therapeutic services pro bono or at a low sliding-scale fee to the families of missing and/or sexually exploited children.

The Private Sector

Private companies play a pivotal role in identifying reporting child exploitation, both within and outside of the technology industry. Other businesses that interact with offenders and victims may provide additional partnership opportunities. By acting as good corporate citizens, these companies can be valuable partners to prevent and combat child exploitation and rescue children from ongoing abuse.

Transparency is important in building these partnerships. Law enforcement, government agencies, NGOs, and survivors must work with companies to share knowledge, inform the development of child safety measures, and understand how offenders use these private companies to offend. Company policies must be designed to protect children and prevent exploitation. NCMEC has cultivated a network of corporate partnerships¹⁶ that provide financial and in-kind support for the organization’s work, and also co-create programs, policies, and communication channels to prevent and intervene in any child exploitation occurring in the companies’ sectors or on their platforms.

Government must engage with the private sector, so companies understand the issues and the important role corporations play in combating these crimes. Such engagement creates shared accountability and a foundation upon which all parties can partner and prevent child sexual exploitation. The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Blue Campaign¹⁷ takes a partnership-first approach as part of their efforts to address human trafficking, for example. Aligned with the DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking,¹⁸ the Blue Campaign is a

¹⁶ <https://www.missingkids.org/supportus/our-corporate-partners#:~:text=NCMEC%20and%20Yubo%20collaborate%20on.increase%20their%20online%20safety%20skills>

¹⁷ <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>

¹⁸ <https://www.dhs.gov/dhs-center-countering-human-trafficking>

national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement and other industry partners to recognize indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. The Blue Campaign leverages partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, law enforcement and state and local authorities to maximize national public engagement on anti-human trafficking efforts through general awareness trainings, as well as specific educational resources to help reduce victimization within vulnerable populations. The Blue Campaign's educational awareness objectives consists of two foundational elements, prevention of human trafficking and protection of exploited persons.

Other public-private partnerships aimed at addressing human trafficking and child exploitation exist and take a more targeted, sector-specific approach:

Transportation

Traffickers may use ride-sharing companies, taxis, or other driver services to transport child victims. Traffickers may also use public transportation or airlines. Transportation companies should be educated about the warning signs of trafficking; they need to train their employees on the warning signs of child exploitation and know how to report and intervene where they suspect trafficking.

The Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI),¹⁹ led by the Department of Transportation, the Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, is an element of the DHS Blue Campaign. The BLI trains aviation industry personnel to identify potential traffickers and human trafficking victims, and to report their suspicions to federal law enforcement. To date, more than 200,000 personnel in the aviation industry have been trained through the BLI, and actionable tips continue to be reported to law enforcement.

Hospitality

Hotels, motels, or other short-term stay venues are often centers for commercial child sexual exploitation. These companies and employees must be trained to identify and respond to sexual exploitation and to work with law enforcement and must train their employees. The No Room for Trafficking program of the American Hotel and Lodging Association and its Foundation is an awareness program that builds on the industry's ongoing commitment and work to end human trafficking. Through elevating, assessing, educating, and supporting the fight to end human trafficking, the campaign helps ensure hotel employees are continuously developing a better understanding of ways to identify traffickers and potential victims in hotels.

Financial Services

The International Labour Organization estimates that human trafficking is a \$150 billion global industry.²⁰ Traffickers often use legitimate financial institutions to fund recruitment of victims and to manage their operations. Federal laws, including the Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) and the USA PATRIOT Act, mandate that financial institutions monitor for, and report suspected illegal activity. Just as technology has changed the world of exploitation, so have financial practices evolved. Agencies and institutions should partner with financial services companies to

¹⁹ <https://www.transportation.gov/administrations/office-policy/blue-lightning-initiative>

²⁰ *Id.* at p. 40

understand how money is used and moves among sellers, and between sellers and buyers in child exploitation crimes. This will both help identify offenders and build cases for prosecution.

In 2006, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) and NCMEC launched the U.S. Financial Coalition Against Child Sexual Exploitation (formerly the Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography).²¹ The U.S. FCACSE's membership²² includes dozens of the country's leading banks, credit card companies, electronic payment networks, third party-payments companies, and internet services companies. Working with law enforcement, the FCACSE's mission has been to disrupt the economics of child exploitation. As a result of its efforts, the use of credit cards to purchase child sexual abuse content online has been virtually eliminated globally. However, websites offering child sexual abuse material now frequently direct buyers away from traditional payment methods, such as credit cards, towards more complicated alternatives, including cryptocurrency, that may dissuade some potential purchasers but are also more difficult to track by financial services companies and law enforcement.

In October 2020, the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issued an advisory for the financial services industry on how to identify and report human trafficking activity through financial transactions and other activity.²³ These recommendations were developed by partnering with law enforcement to identify 20 new financial and behavioral indicators of labor and sex trafficking, and four mechanisms that human traffickers use to evade detection, hide their illicit proceeds, and profit off their victims. FinCEN offered further guidance to financial institutions regarding filing suspicious activity reports (SARs) in September 2021 in response to an increase in online child sexual exploitation.²⁴ This guidance noted offenders' increased use of the Dark Web, encryption, and convertible virtual currency (also referred to as CVC and commonly referred to as cryptocurrency) to conceal their crimes.

In addition, the United States is a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2019, OSCE's office of the Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings issued a report focused on tracking financial transactions arising from human trafficking.²⁵ It includes a step-by-step guide for such investigations and a compendium of resources.

Example of Public-Private Partnership: Financial Services

In 2020, a partnership co-led by Scotiabank and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (C3P) and is supported by the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC), with participation from major financial institutions and law enforcement agencies

²¹ <https://www.icmec.org/fcacse/>

²² <https://www.icmec.org/fcacse/fcacse-members/>

²³ FinCEN Advisory, FIN- 2020-A008, "Supplemental Advisory on Identifying and Reporting Human Trafficking and Related Activity," (October 15, 2020). https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/advisory/2020-10-15/Advisory%20Human%20Trafficking%20508%20FINAL_0.pdf

²⁴ FinCEN Advisory, FIN-2021-NTC3 "FinCEN Calls Attention to Online Child Sexual Exploitation Crimes" (September 16, 2021) <https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/shared/FinCEN%20OCSE%20Notice%20508C.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/438323>

in Canada, was announced, to better detect, report, and disrupt money laundering used as part of child exploitation crimes. Named Project Shadow,²⁶ the collective aims to:

- Raise awareness of child exploitation amongst financial crimes professionals and encourage investigation of these crimes
- Identify indicators and typologies of money laundering relating to child exploitation
- Increase suspicious transaction reporting and add a new report code to track reports of potential online child sexual exploitation

Technology

Evolving technology has transformed the dynamics of child sexual exploitation; from how offenders find, groom, and recruit victims, how they perpetrate abuse, how they market children and images and videos of abuse, to how they conceal their crimes. Under federal law, technology companies are required to send a CyberTipline report to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) whenever they are aware of an apparent instance of a CSAM offense on their platform.²⁷ Federal law provides guidelines on what kinds of information technology companies can include in a CyberTip report, but there are no requirements of what information must be shared – companies can ultimately decide for themselves what details they pass on.²⁸ Although they are not required to proactively search for CSAM on their platforms or networks,²⁹ some voluntarily do so.

While online platforms can be exploited to target victims, perpetrate sexual abuse and exploitation, and distribute CSAM, changes in technology can be valuable tools for identifying abuse online and apprehending offenders. PhotoDNA is an example of what is possible when law enforcement and partner organizations work together to combat child exploitation harnessing the expertise and capabilities of the technology industry.³⁰ PhotoDNA creates a unique digital signature (known as a “hash”) of an image which is then compared against signatures (hashes) of other photos to find copies of the same image. When matched with a database containing hashes of previously identified illegal images, PhotoDNA is a powerful tool to help detect, disrupt, and report the distribution of CSAM. Microsoft sublicensed PhotoDNA to NCMEC for its own use and provides this valuable technology for free to law enforcement and other qualified organizations including technology companies, developers, and non-profit organizations for the purpose of combating child exploitation. Today, PhotoDNA is used by organizations around the world and has assisted in the detection, disruption, and reporting of millions of child exploitation images.

Social Services

A disturbing number of children experiencing homelessness or under the care of social services become victims of sex trafficking. Under federal law, because a minor cannot legally consent to

²⁶ <https://www.fintrac-canafe.gc.ca/intel/operation/exploitation-eng>. See also <https://www.acamstoday.org/project-shadow-aml-investigations-into-online-child-sexual-exploitation/>

²⁷ See 18 U.S.C. § 2258A.

²⁸ See 18 U.S.C. 2258A(b).

²⁹ See 18 U.S.C. § 2258A(h)

³⁰ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/photodna>

sex, any instance of commercial sex is considered child sex trafficking, regardless of whether the child was or was not forced to do so by a third-party. This includes “survival sex,” which is when someone who is homeless or facing severe need trades sex in exchange for food, a place to sleep, or other basic needs. A 2017 study of more than 600 youth in North America who had run away or were experiencing homelessness found that 14% had been victims of sex trafficking, while 19% reported turning to “survival sex.”³¹ Children in transitional housing also face heightened risk: in the same study, nearly 15% reported that they were recruited directly from shelter programs or group homes.³² Because children who are involved in the child welfare system (having already been victims of abuse or neglect) are more vulnerable to exploitation, it is critical that both criminal investigators and those engaged in prevention efforts partner with child welfare agencies to strengthen the current system. Strengthening includes ensuring safe, effective placements for children with adults who are trained in CSEC specific care and includes recovering children who are missing from care. Today, most prevention services and partnerships with social services are reactive, working to prevent further abuse. We need to dedicate significant resources to identifying at-risk families and communities, to partnering with schools and health care systems to identify those families and children, and to preventing abuse and exploitation before it occurs. That would significantly reduce societal costs of abuse and exploitation (substance use, lifelong health care costs, mental health costs, etc.) and reduce the cost of investigating and prosecuting these cases.

Youth-Serving Organizations (YSOs) and Religious Organizations

Government agencies should also strengthen partnerships with youth-serving organizations (YSOs) such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and both Girl and Boy Scouts. First, YSOs are a good avenue to provide prevention education to children. Second, the services they offer can fill gaps existing due to strained resources in government child welfare programs. Similarly, faith-based organizations, particularly those that serve children and marginalized populations, can help law enforcement engage with communities. All youth-serving organizations (including group homes, foster homes, and detention centers) are magnets to those wanting access to children for illicit purposes. Like others, YSOs and religious organizations must have strong protective processes that prevent offenders from contacting the children in their programs, and they must have protocols for responding to and reporting allegations of abuse, including to law enforcement. By working with them, law enforcement and government agencies can help ensure these non-governmental organizations have consistent processes and policies that comply with federal and state law and are in the best interest of children.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

³¹ Labor and Sex Trafficking Among Homeless Youth - A Ten-City Study: Full Report, Laura T. Murphy, 2017 <https://www.rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/library/2017/labor-and-sex-trafficking-among-homeless-youth-ten-city-study-full-report>

³² On-Ramps, Intersections, and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking, Polaris Project, July 2018 <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/A-Roadmap-for-Systems-and-Industries-to-Prevent-and-Disrupt-Human-Trafficking.pdf> NOTE: This report includes data from both adult and child victims, as well as victims of labor trafficking. 35% of respondents were under the age of 18 when they were initially trafficked, and 77% of all respondents were involved in a form of sexual trafficking.

Because of the vast ability of child exploitation material on the internet, offenders now have access to abuse and exploitation of children anywhere in the world from their phones and computers at home, at work, or anywhere else. To respond to this growing global threat, there are a number of domestic and international organizations that support our mission to end child exploitation.

Examples of NGO Partners

A21 exists to end human trafficking around the world. A21's solution includes reaching vulnerable communities through educational programs, rescuing individuals from exploitative situations through child advocacy centers and legal assistance, and providing aid, relocation, and job opportunities to former victims of human trafficking to break the cycle of re-victimization. A21 also has a yearly walk for freedom to increase awareness of human trafficking.

Source: <https://www.a21.org/>

Brave Movement is a survivor-centered global movement fighting to end childhood sexual violence. The Movement's campaign involves demanding global finance, calling on all governments to provide justice for victims, and calling for a child rights and protection drive approach to creating a safe internet. The Movement demands prevention, healing, and justice from global leaders. The Brave Movement's Theory of Change provides the foundation upon which they will create the social change urgently needed to end sexual violence against children and adolescents by 2030.

Source: <https://www.bravemovement.org/>

Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a national charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Their goal is to reduce the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, assist in the location of missing children, and prevent child victimization through a number of programs, services, and resources for Canadian families, educators, child-serving organizations, law enforcement, and other parties.

Source: <https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/about-us/>

Child Rescue Coalition (CRC) is a nonprofit organization that rescues children from sexual abuse by building technology for law enforcement to track, arrest and prosecute child predators, provided to law enforcement around the world free of charge. The CRC uses its collected data about child sexual abuse material to help law enforcement to arrest and prosecute child predators worldwide. More than 10,000 law enforcement officers in all 50 U.S. states and in 97 countries around the globe use the CRC's technology to target and apprehend predators.

Source: <https://childrescuecoalition.org/>

ECPAT works to better understand the web of child sexual exploitation through research and pushes for the critical systemic and social changes necessary to eliminate child exploitation within governments, intergovernmental institutions, the private sector, civil society and the general public. ECPAT has organized and co-sponsored three Global Congresses (Stockholm 1996, Yokohama 2001, and Rio De Janeiro 2008) which has firmly placed the issue of child sexual exploitation on the agendas of global leaders and decision-makers. ECPAT looks at this problem in all settings, including online and in the context of travel and tourism.

Source: <https://ecpat.org/about-us>

End Violence Against Children is a global partnership and fund launched in July 2016 by the U.S. Secretary-General working to achieve a world in which every child grows up in a safe, secure, and nurturing environment free from all forms of violence. The End Violence Partnership is a platform for collective, evidence-based advocacy and action. It connects and convenes its unique coalition of more than 700 organizations to raise awareness, catalyze leadership commitments, mobilize new resources, promote evidence-based solutions, and support those working to end all forms of violence, abuse and neglect of children. The End Violence Fund is a flexible funding vehicle that identifies new and emerging challenges focused solely on Sustainable Development Goal 16.2: ending all forms of violence against children by 2030.

Source: <https://www.end-violence.org/who-we-are>

Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) brings an international perspective to making the online world safer for kids and families. Their 20+ members include tech giants Amazon and Verizon. FOSI convenes leaders in industry, government and the non-profit sectors to collaborate and innovate new solutions and policies in the field of online safety. Through research, resources, events and special projects, FOSI promotes a culture of responsibility online and encourages a sense of digital citizenship for all. FOSI prioritizes policy and research, international events, and good digital parenting to help decrease the numbers of online sex abuse.

Source: <https://www.fosi.org/>

International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) works to protect children around the world by disrupting the economics and mechanics of child sexual exploitation, training partners on the front lines to prevent and respond to cases of missing children, child sexual abuse, and exploitation, and collaborating with key stakeholders. Regional representation in Australia, Brazil, and Singapore allows the Centre to respond to local and regional needs, develop customized programs, and raise awareness of its mission. The Centre's programs include model national response, law enforcement training, and CSAM reporting.

Source: <https://www.icmec.org/>

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 29 program offices in 17 countries to combat trafficking and slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power. IJM's Community Protection Model includes strengthening justice systems, rescuing and restoring victims, bringing criminals to justice, and scaling demands for protection.

Source: <https://www.ijm.org/>

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) works with families, victims, private industry, law enforcement, and the public to assist with preventing child abductions, recovering missing children, and providing services to deter and combat child sexual exploitation. NCMEC's mission is to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization.

Source: <https://www.missingkids.org/footer/about>

Tech Coalition is an alliance of global tech companies who are working together to combat child sexual exploitation and online abuse. These organizations include Microsoft, Pinterest, Yahoo, Zoom, and many more large tech companies. The Coalition provides resources to tech companies on what industry is doing to tackle the issue. The Coalition is working across industry to accelerate the adoption of existing technologies and invest in the development of new technologies to combat child sexual abuse. The Coalition is driving greater accountability and consistency across industry through meaningful reporting of online child sexual abuse material across member platform and services. The Coalition also funds independent research to help understand patterns of online sex abuse.

Source: <https://www.technologycoalition.org/>

Thorn identifies critical technical needs and produces tools that allow law enforcement to stay ahead of perpetrators and identify more children victims. Thorn's flagship product is Spotlight, which accelerates victim identification and helps law enforcement make the best use of the critical time they have to focus on finding more child sex trafficking victims. Thorn offers technology for small and mid-sized companies, including Safer, which is a commercial product for platforms to identify, remove, and report child sexual abuse material, and the Sound Practices Guide, which offers best practices and concrete steps for companies to help protect kids on their platforms. Thorn also seeks to increase awareness for preventing further abuse by equipping youth with the knowledge and tools they need to resist online threats.

Source: <https://www.thorn.org/>

WeProtect Global Alliance brings together governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations to protect children sexual exploitation and abuse online. In 2020, it relaunched as an independent organization combining two initiatives: the European Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice's Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online; and WeProtect, established by the U.K. government as a global multi-stakeholder response to combating online child sexual abuse. WeProtect generates political commitment and practical approaches to make the digital world safer for children, preventing sexual abuse and long-term harm.

Source: <https://www.weprotect.org/>

Funding for Partnerships

The PROTECT Act³³ endorsed funding to support child exploitation-focused partnerships. However, those provisions have never been fully funded.³⁴ As a result, partnership offices are often underfunded and understaffed, and they sometimes lack personnel with significant experience working with the stakeholders necessary for effective collaboration. When budgetary challenges arise, partnership programs are often the first to be cut.

The absence of flexible funding sources undermines the ability to pursue partnerships. Partnership opportunities often arise unexpectedly when outside entities offer to provide

³³ S.151 - PROTECT Act <https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/senate-bill/151>

³⁴ For more details on the levels of PROTECT Act funding and how the funds are used, please see the Existing and Requested Funding for the Prevention & Interdiction of Child Exploitation appendix.

resources for projects in collaboration with government support and funding. Discretionary funding for federal agencies is crucial to take advantage of these opportunities and pursue collaboration with outside partners.

Significant Developments

The Five Country Ministerial (commonly known as the FCM) is an annual meeting of home affairs, public safety, interior, security, border and immigration ministers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The FCM grew out of an intelligence-sharing agreement among these countries, referred to as the “Five Eyes.” At FCM meetings, ministers meet to discuss national security challenges of mutual interest and concern and to discuss opportunities for collaboration.

Following the FCM meeting in 2019, the collective issued the *Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Voluntary Principles*.³⁵ These principles provide a common and consistent framework to guide the digital industry in its efforts to help combat the proliferation of online child exploitation.

Thus far, 17 technology companies have endorsed the Voluntary Principles.³⁶ This is a powerful example of successful partnership spanning geographies and the public and private sectors. However, more needs to be done to encourage other companies to adopt the principles.³⁷

Strategic Response

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<p>Map community resources and establish a single point of contact: Time and resources should be dedicated to mapping what agencies and resources exist within a community or jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Develop training for state, local, and tribal agencies and organizations about partnership best practices: State and federal agencies should issue directives and develop training to provide clarity and encourage best practices about how to partner across sectors and geographies.</p>
<p>Encourage state and local efforts to mandate curricula for teachers on how to identify, respond to, report, and prevent child exploitation: Education agencies and school systems should develop and implement age-appropriate preventive curricula for students.</p>	<p>Explore ways federal agencies can support partnership on child exploitation: For example, the Department of Education should consider opportunities for supporting greater partnership between the education system and child exploitation prevention and interdiction efforts.</p>

³⁵ <https://www.weprotect.org/library/voluntary-principles-to-counter-online-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>

³⁶ The companies are Amazon, Apple, Dropbox, Google, MatchGroup, Mega, Meta, Microsoft, Pinterest, Roblox, Semantics21, Snap Inc., Spotify, TikTok, Twitter, Yubo, and Zoom. *See* <https://www.weprotect.org/library/voluntary-principles-to-counter-online-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>

³⁷ For more information, please see the Technology chapter.

<p>Fully fund the PROTECT Act: Congress should approve appropriations for the full extent of the funding that has been allocated in the PROTECT Act.</p>	<p>Provide funding and resources to support state, local, and tribal partnership programs: Funding, guidelines, and educational resources should be provided to assist with the execution of and compliance with partnership-oriented policies or standards established around child exploitation.</p>
	<p>Disseminate training on how to incorporate survivors into organizations and partnerships: Leverage existing resources and initiatives in the anti-trafficking field and as part of broader national training on how to best cultivate child exploitation-focused partnerships, content should include guidance on how to integrate survivors respectfully and effectively into organizations, task forces, or teams, including in leadership roles.</p>

Operational/Enforcement

Those working on child exploitation issues often do not know what resources and supports are available in their communities to support the children they work with. Solving this problem requires resource mapping of all of agencies and resources within the community or state known to employ best practices.

One entity could serve as a central point of contact to connect various partner agencies and organizations. Much of this information is already known to some agencies, but enhanced community mapping work would strengthen existing networks.

To fully operationalize widespread partnerships, an interagency compact or additional memorandum of understanding may be needed. A top-down directive from federal agencies dictating that they must focus on child exploitation and collaborate with one another will ensure this work is prioritized over the long-term.

Funding/Resources

The PROTECT Act should be fully funded by Congress to maintain existing partnerships and expand collaboration efforts. Legislation and directives are important steps towards addressing the child exploitation threat but are ineffective without the funding to support them. Often mandates are established without recognizing the time and financial constraints that institutions and individuals face. Grant funding, clearinghouses of educational prevention resources and programs, and guidelines for policies and trainings should be developed to ease the burden on partners.

Education & Training

The desire for greater partnership on child exploitation issues exists, but processes and training on how best to bring together diverse and geographically distributed entities and form effective

partnerships is needed. To encourage participation, state and federal agencies could provide examples or resources, or issue guidance, highlighting examples regarding what level of collaboration has proven effective and develop trainings on recommended partnership models and operational best practices to ease the initial challenges involved in forming any new partnership.

State licensing and consumer affairs agencies should require or offer (as appropriate for the sector) training to businesses and others that may regularly encounter child exploitation and trafficking, such as body art, hospitality, healthcare, and others.

Outreach & Victim Support

All training must include guidance on how to integrate survivors and survivors' experiences into collaborations and partnerships including in professional and leadership roles. Survivors must be respected as experts and professionals and should be compensated as any other consultant or professional would be.