

# Protecting Our Children



All too often, we hear of crimes against children that remind us of the challenges we face in protecting them.

While we cannot shield them from every conceivable threat, there are some key ways to reduce the risk of harm.

For example, families deserve to know their neighborhoods are free of parole violators who have already harmed children and could easily do so again. In August 2003, I formed the Fugitive Unit as part of our Criminal Investigation Division to track down missing parolees who once committed sexual crimes against children.

So far, the Fugitive Unit has arrested more than 220 of these child predators. Just last month, my office arrested four fugitives during a sweep in El Paso. Children are now safer with these predators off the streets.

In addition, the Fugitive Unit has arrested more than 30 unregistered sex offenders as part of Operation Missing Predator, a

statewide initiative launched in April to locate and arrest convicted sex offenders who are not in compliance with sex offender registration requirements. We will not rest until all sex offenders are in custody again and no longer posing a threat to Texas children.

Kids also face an increasing risk from Internet predators. Investigators in our Cyber Crimes Unit continuously patrol Internet chat rooms to intercept these predators before they sexually abuse a child. In August, two men were given 10-year prison sentences for attempting to meet what they thought were young teenaged girls for sexual encounters after talking with them on the Internet. To date, more than 60 people have been arrested and jailed by the Cyber Crimes Unit.

My staff also accepts complaints and works with local, state and federal authorities to investigate and prosecute crimes involving child pornography.

Beyond protecting children's physical safety, there are other tangible ways to support a child's well-being. Child support, for example, helps parents pay for

necessities like food and shelter. Research shows that children who receive regular child support also make better grades in school, are more likely to finish high school and attend college, have fewer behavior problems at school, and are more likely to see their fathers.

Last year, my office collected \$1.7 billion in child support that provided financial security to hundreds of thousands of Texas children. We also collaborate with organizations around the state to help build strong and healthy families, including healthy marriages, because that's where children thrive the best.

The job of protecting and supporting kids rests primarily with parents. However, the rest of us will be measured largely by how well we support them in this endeavor. We must continue to rise to this challenge.

To find out more about how the Office of the Attorney General helps children, visit our website at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us). To apply for child support services, you can also call the Child Support Division at 1-800-252-8014.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

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#### Tips for protecting your children online:

- Visit the Attorney General's Kids' Page at [www.oag.state.tx.us/kids](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/kids)
- Surf the Internet with your kids
- Establish ground rules for Internet usage
- Place the computer in a public room
- Teach your kids not to give out personal information

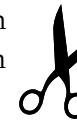
#### Protect your children by supporting their well-being:

- Pay child support
- Stay involved in your child's life

#### To apply for child support services:

Visit Child Support Interactive at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us)

Call the 24-hour voice response system at (800) 252-8014



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's website at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us).