

The Attorney General's Office Protects Children from Internet Predators



By **Greg Abbott**
Attorney General of Texas

The Internet has given child predators the anonymity to act on their perversions. That is why it is imperative for us to be vigilant in tracking down and locking up these predators. Today, law enforcement agencies across Texas and the nation are working together to bring justice to those who prey on our children.

The Texas Attorney General's Office formed the Internet Bureau to track online predators and train law enforcement officers. Our investigators are online every day looking for evidence of cybercrimes against children.

In the last three months, the Internet Bureau has intensified its efforts, arresting nearly a dozen suspected child predators. In a four-day period alone, investigators arrested four men.

Three of the men traveled to Hays County expecting to meet 13-year-old girls. Another traveled to Kendall County to meet what he thought would be a 13-year-old boy.

Three men have been charged with attempted aggravated sexual assault of a child. Another has been charged

with criminal solicitation of a minor. Both charges are felonies.

The "children" the men stalked turned out to be Internet Bureau undercover investigators. The men allegedly initiated sex talk with the children in Internet chat rooms and allegedly planned to meet them to engage in sexual activity.

The true intentions of child predators are clear, and our Internet Bureau officers have no qualms whatsoever about taking these people off the street and putting them behind bars when they cross the line. I will not tolerate the victimization of children.

While we are pleased that our efforts have been successful at taking predators out of chat rooms and putting them into jail cells, it is important to remember that you as parents are still the most effective tool at protecting your children.

The fact is, when you strike up a conversation by e-mail, you have no idea who you are dealing with. Predators use this fact to take advantage of trusting, curious young people. We turn the tables and use it against the predators. But too often the predator's target really is a child.

You can protect your child by taking some simple precautions. You should be aware that in chat rooms, someone may very well pick up on your child's youth, gender, and vulnerability. You

might be shocked to find out how quickly a dangerous contact can occur. Our investigators posing as children have no problem attracting predators.

Surf the Internet with your children. This will allow you to assess the types of Web sites and chat rooms your children visit. You may wish to place your computer in a family room or the kitchen, which will make it easier for you to monitor your children's Internet activity.

Establish ground rules for Internet surfing. Set the hours when your children can access the Internet, for how long, and what Web sites they can visit. Most Internet service providers (ISP) provide technical safeguards that allow parents to restrict certain Web sites. Contact your ISP for more information.

The Internet is a wonderful way for children to learn and grow. As long as you provide a little guidance, they can safely enjoy the World Wide Web.

POINTS TO REMEMBER TIPS FOR INTERNET SAFETY

Teach your children NEVER to give out online, especially in a chat room:

- their last name
- home address
- phone number
- or any other information (school, schedule, etc.) that would enable someone to find them.

Tell your children NEVER to meet face-to-face with someone they have met online

Tell your children ALWAYS to show you any message that makes them uncomfortable

For More Information:

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

Federal Trade Commission
www.ftc.gov

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
www.missingkids.org

For more tips on internet safety
To report child pornography



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GREG ABBOTT

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.