



OJJDP FACT SHEET

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The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

by Cathy Girouard

Since 1982, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) has spearheaded the national effort to prevent child abductions and return missing and exploited children to their families. In partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), NCMEC continues to enhance and expand its ability to offer critical intervention and prevention services to families and support law enforcement agencies at the Federal, State, and local levels in cases involving missing or exploited children.

On October 12, 1999, exactly 15 years after the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984 (MCAA) was signed, the Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act, Public Law 106-71, was enacted, amending MCAA and directing OJJDP to award an annual grant to NCMEC. The 1999 statute directs NCMEC to operate a national 24-hour toll-free telephone hotline for callers to report information on missing children and an official national resource center and information clearinghouse for missing and exploited children. Under the law, NCMEC must also coordinate public and private programs that locate and recover missing children and reunite them with their families; assist families and law enforcement in locating and recovering missing and exploited children; and provide training and technical assistance in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of cases involving missing and exploited children.

Recent Achievements

Over the years, NCMEC has continued to improve its services and programs. Some of its accomplishments are described in the following paragraphs.

Toll-Free Hotline

Since 1984, NCMEC has received more than 1.5 million calls from around the world. The 24-hour hotline (800-THE-LOST), with 23 incoming lines, can handle phone calls in more than 140 languages. Once a call is received, photos and reports of missing children can be forwarded immediately to appropriate law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, and State missing children clearinghouses.

Child Recovery

NCMEC played a role in the recovery of 5,985 children in 2000, up 11.5 percent from 1999. Through the "Picture Them Home" campaign, sightings reported to the hotline reached 14,516 in 2000, an increase of 48.1 percent from 1999. NCMEC has 1,977 private sector partners who distribute missing children photos. Recently, ADVO, Inc. (one of the partners) celebrated its 100th child recovery, and Wal-Mart (another partner) celebrated its 50th recovery. Nearly 1,150 children have been recovered as a direct result of NCMEC's photo distribution system. As a new partner, the Internal Revenue Service has distributed more than 750 million images through tax booklets and publications, resulting in the recovery of 105 children.

Age Progression and Forensic Imaging

Use of this advanced technology, whereby forensic artists use sophisticated computer software to create age-progressed images of long-term missing children, led to 45 recoveries. For fiscal year 2001, at the recommendation of Congress, NCMEC will provide a case manager to help medical examiners identify the remains of missing children using forensic imaging.

International Cases

International child abduction cases increased to 1,697 in 2000, up 66.7 percent from 1999. Of those cases, NCMEC located and returned 1,374 children, a 72.4-percent increase over 1999.

CyberTipline/CyberTipline II

Launched in 1998, CyberTipline (www.cybertipline.com) allows online computer users to report information regarding the enticement of children for pornography, sex tourism, prostitution, molestation, and other sexual acts. To date, NCMEC's CyberTipline has received more than 38,000 reports of child pornography or child exploitation that have been forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. 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 and 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.

Newborns Abducted From Medical Settings

NCMEC continues to provide healthcare professionals nationally accredited training on infant security in medical settings. To date, more than 52,592 personnel have completed training and more than 803 hospitals have received onsite security assessments.

Case Analysis and Support

NCMEC continues to provide high-level case analysis and assessment to families and law enforcement. Behavioral assessments of perpetrators, used in conjunction with sightings of missing children; a geographic imaging system, used to plot and analyze locations of sightings; and access to Federal and private database search tools (e.g., Database Technologies' AutoTrack Plus and ChoicePoint) support law enforcement investigations and help verify reported leads and sightings.

Training

NCMEC provides law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other criminal justice professionals training in the investigation, detection, and prosecution of child sexual exploitation and missing children cases. The Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Center, alone, has trained more than 1,512 police chiefs and sheriffs and more than 1,060 unit commanders through seminars for chief executive officers and "Protecting Children Online" courses for unit commanders.

New Resources for Families and Communities

NCMEC continues to distribute essential safety information to children and families. NCMEC's new publication, *Know the Rules . . . After School Safety for Children Who Are Home Alone*, offers safety tips, guidance, and a checklist for families in which children must be left at home unaccompanied.

For a complete list of NCMEC publications and other resource materials, visit the NCMEC Web site at www.missingkids.com and click on the "Library of Resources" page.

In February 2001, NCMEC launched a state-of-the-art Internet safety initiative, the NetSmartz Workshop, to better protect children who regularly use the Internet. The NetSmartz Workshop is a DVD-ROM that uses three-dimensional technology to create animated characters who provide interactive lessons to children. The workshop will be tested in 50 Boys & Girls Clubs and, during the next 5 years, NCMEC plans to release NetSmartz to Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide.

For Further Information

For more information on NCMEC and its programs, initiatives, and activities, please contact:

John Rabun, Jr., Chief Operating Officer, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 699 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703-274-3900, www.missingkids.com; or Cathy Girouard, Program Manager, Child Protection Division, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 810 Seventh Street NW., Washington, DC 20531, 202-353-9244, Girouard@ojp.usdoj.gov, www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org

Cathy Girouard is a Program Manager in OJJDP's Child Protection Division.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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