

# **Attorney General Raoul, Illinois State Police Director Kelly Highlight Increase In Online Child Sexual Exploitation Reports**

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SPRINGFIELD – Attorney General Kwame Raoul and Illinois State Police Director Brendan Kelly were joined today by investigators from the Attorney General’s office and the Illinois State Police to highlight the increase in reports of online child sexual exploitation during the pandemic. The agencies partner to protect children online through Illinois’ Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force.

Attorney General Raoul’s office, with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, runs the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force that investigates child sexual exploitation crimes, trains law enforcement agencies and provides online safety education to children and adults. During 2020, the ICAC Task Force received 5,184 CyberTipline reports from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). NCMEC serves as the national clearinghouse for public and electronic service providers to report online child sexual exploitation. Raoul’s office projects a

16% increase in reports during 2021. Partnerships with the Illinois State Police (ISP) and local law enforcement agencies through the ICAC Task Force are critical in apprehending offenders throughout the state.

“Over the last year, investigators with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force have been busier than ever as they fulfill our commitment to protect children when they are online,” Raoul said. “I would like to thank the Illinois State Police for its years of collaboration and urge parents and guardians to know who their children are interacting with online. Your child may be safely at home playing games or chatting online, but it is important to know who they may be communicating with.”

“Criminal investigations are increasingly digital, and that demands greater investments in training and technology and greater partnership between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to pursue criminal activity in the cyber world,” Illinois State Police Director Brendan F. Kelly said. “This partnership with the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute Internet Crimes Against Children is the perfect example of those priorities, investments and joint criminal investigative approach.”

According to Raoul’s office, the significant increase in reports of child pornography (possession, manufacture, and distribution) could be attributed to multiple factors. While most reports involved adults abusing children, the task force also saw an increase in reports from Snapchat and Instagram involving youths sharing minors’ self-produced content. Additionally, the ICAC Task Force saw an increase in viral content. For example, people would share material online containing child sexual abuse in an attempt to raise public awareness on social media.

Illinois’ ICAC Task Force is one of 61 ICAC Task Forces throughout the country and is comprised of a network of more than 278 local, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Since 2018, the ICAC Task Force has collaborated with the ISP by holding training classes and partnering to apprehend individuals who seek to exploit children online. The task force has helped the ISP train more than 165 personnel to date. In 2020, Raoul’s investigators, along with the ISP Division of Criminal Investigation conducted an investigation in Marion, Illinois. The investigation resulted in the arrest of a 19-year-old male who was allegedly exploiting and blackmailing multiple juvenile victims in Illinois, California, and South Dakota by demanding they produce child sexual abuse material. Since 2018, the ICAC Task Force and the ISP have handled 225 cases.

Since 2006, the Attorney General's ICAC Task Force has been involved in more than 1,780 arrests of sexual predators. The task force also has provided internet safety training and education to more than 953,500 parents, teachers and students and more than 23,100 law enforcement professionals.

To report suspected online child sexual exploitation, please contact local law enforcement or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children CyberTipline at 1-800-THE-LOST.