

# **Attorney General Raoul Obtains Guilty Pleas In Fayette County Child Pornography Ring**

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CHICAGO - Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced a Vandalia, Illinois couple pleaded guilty in Fayette County Circuit Court to possessing and disseminating child pornography. The 2021 case was a result of an investigation Raoul's office conducted into an alleged child pornography ring operating in Fayette County and is

part of Raoul's ongoing work, in collaboration with federal law enforcement agencies and local law enforcement officials throughout Illinois, to apprehend offenders who download and trade child pornography online.

Andrew Wehrle, 39, pleaded guilty to two counts of dissemination of child pornography and one count of production of child pornography. He could face up to 26 years in prison. Amber Wehrle, 38, pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of child pornography and one count of indecent solicitation of an adult. She could face up to 13 years in prison. Both individuals will be sentenced at a future date.

"Child pornography is a heinous crime, and I am pleased these predators are being held accountable for exploiting innocent children," Raoul said. "I am committed to stopping offenders who prey on our children, and my office will continue to partner with local law enforcement agencies to protect Illinois communities."

In March 2021, Raoul's investigators, with the assistance of the Vandalia Police Department, conducted a search of a residence in the 600 block of North Fourth Street in Vandalia and arrested Andrew and Amber Wehrle soon after discovering evidence of child pornography.

The search was conducted in connection to child pornography charges Raoul's office filed in 2021 against another Vandalia man, Ferrell Mason Kissiar, 47. Raoul's office charged Kissiar with three counts of disseminating child pornography, two counts of possessing child pornography, one count of reproducing child pornography, one count of indecent solicitation of an adult, and one count of conspiracy to commit aggravated criminal sexual abuse. Kissiar's trial is scheduled June 20 in Fayette County Circuit Court.

"As law enforcement officials, it is our responsibility to protect children from harm and bring those who exploit them to justice," said Vandalia Police Chief Jeff Ray. "I commend the diligent work of all those involved in this investigation and hope that the outcome of this case serves as a reminder that child pornography is a serious crime that will not be tolerated in our communities."

The cases are part of Attorney General Raoul's work to investigate and prosecute child pornographers in Illinois. 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 exploitation crimes and trains law enforcement agencies. The task force receives CyberTips, or online reports of child pornography, from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Over the last several years, CyberTipline reports have steadily increased. In 2022, reports to the ICAC increased by 26% over 2021.

Illinois' ICAC Task Force is one of 61 ICAC task forces throughout the country and is comprised of a network of more than 175 local, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Since 2019, the Attorney General's ICAC Task Force has received more than 30,400 CyberTips and has been involved in more than 485 arrests of sexual predators. Since 2006, the Attorney General's ICAC Task Force has been involved in more than 1,958 arrests of sexual predators. The task force also has provided internet safety training and education to more than 1 million parents, teachers and students, in addition to more than 23,844 law enforcement professionals.

Raoul reminds the public that online child sexual exploitation can be reported at [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com), and child abuse can be reported at [dcfsonlinereporting.dcf.illinois.gov](http://dcfsonlinereporting.dcf.illinois.gov). In addition, local child advocacy centers can be found at [www.childrensadvocacycentersofillinois.org](http://www.childrensadvocacycentersofillinois.org).

Deputy Bureau Chief Shannon M. O'Brien and Assistant Attorney General Katherine Hagerty from Raoul's High Tech Crimes Bureau prosecuted this case.