

# Attorney General Charges Benton Resident With Possession Of Child Pornography

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**CHICAGO** – Attorney General Kwame Raoul announced today that his office charged a Franklin County man with possession of child pornography. The Benton, Illinois resident is also facing separate federal child pornography charges. The case 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.

Austin W. Lee, 29, was charged today in a Franklin County Circuit Court with 10 counts of possession of child pornography, Class 2 felonies, each punishable by up to seven years in prison; and five counts of sexual contact/sexual conduct with an animal, Class 4 felonies, each punishable by up to three years in prison. He is currently detained at the Franklin County Jail and his next court date is Nov. 15.

“Child pornography is a horrific crime that can leave life-long scars on victims and their families, and we must hold predators accountable – particularly those who repeat their crimes,” Raoul said. “My office’s Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force is committed to collaborating with law enforcement throughout the state to protect Illinois families from offenders who demonstrate that they will continue exploit young, innocent children.”

Raoul’s investigators, with the assistance of the Benton Police Department, conducted a search of Lee’s residence on Oct. 31 in the 600 block of Maple Street in Benton and arrested him after discovering evidence of child pornography and sexual conduct with an animal. Lee was previously charged by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Illinois with counts related to child pornography.

Raoul’s office will co-prosecute this case with the Franklin County State’s Attorney Abby Dinn.

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 35,000 CyberTips and has been involved in more than 600 arrests of sexual predators. Since 2006, the Attorney General’s ICAC Task Force has been involved in more than 1,990 arrests of sexual predators. The task force also has provided internet safety training and education to tens of thousands of parents, teachers, students and law enforcement professionals.

Attorney General Raoul also reminded 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).

Assistant Attorney General Vanessa Minson is prosecuting this case for Raoul's Office.