DHS EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

DHS is a global leader in combating child exploitation and abuse. The DHS Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU)—part of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Cyber Crimes Center (C3)—leads the nation in the fight against online child sexual abuse. CEIU detects and apprehends producers and distributors of child sexual abuse material and perpetrators of transnational child sexual abuse; identifies and rescues child victims around the world; and trains domestic and international law enforcement partners in cutting-edge investigative practices. With interagency partners and other DHS offices and agencies, from the U.S. Secret Service to the Science and Technology (S&T) directorate, DHS brings to bear its full resources in combating these heinous crimes.

Recent DHS Highlights

- The HSI Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU) identified and/or rescued 1,177 child victims in child exploitation investigations in FY 2021. During this same period, CEIU arrested 3,776 individuals for crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children and helped to secure more than 1,500 convictions.
- CEIU’s Angel Watch Center issued 1,722 notifications regarding international travel by convicted child sex offenders in FY 2021, resulting in more than 600 denials of entry by foreign nations.
- On March 24, 2022, Secretary Mayorkas, together with Attorney General Garland and Five Country Ministerial partners (Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States), issued a statement commemorating the second anniversary of the Voluntary Principles to Combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and calling on tech companies to do more to fight this growing threat.
- U.S. Secret Service (USSS) polygraph examiners provided training in FY 2021 to over 1,100 sworn law enforcement officials throughout the country to enhance their counter-child exploitation tactics.
- USSS polygraph exams of online offenders (often those in possession of child sexual abuse material) conducted in FY 2021 uncovered 112 victims of sexual abuse, 292 separate sexual assaults, and 1,608 instances of child sexual abuse material exchanged among adults.
- HSI Victim Assistance Specialists have already assisted more than 300 child exploitation victims in FY 2022. HSI Forensic Interview Specialists have already conducted approximately 600 trauma-informed forensic interviews with child victims to support investigations and bring perpetrators to justice.
- HSI’s Project iGuardian provided tips and resources to nearly 60,000 children and adults in FY 2021 for keeping kids safe from online sexual predators.
- In the first quarter of FY 2022, USSS more than doubled the ranks of its Childhood Smart Program (CSP) Ambassadors, Secret Service personnel who educate parents, teachers, and children in child exploitation prevention strategies. USSS CSP Ambassadors educated more than 2,500 parents, teachers, and children in FY 2021 about how to prevent online sexual exploitation and child abduction.
- U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced a final rule on March 7, 2022, to clarify eligibility criteria and evidentiary requirements for Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) classification to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program.
• The HSI Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Unit, through Operation Limelight USA, trained 1,900 individuals across the interagency in FY 2021 on female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) which aims to prevent, and help victims of, child FGM/C, a severe form of child abuse under federal law.

• In February 2022, the Federal School Safety Clearinghouse—led by the DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)—delivered an educational webinar to more than 400 school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and law enforcement representatives regarding Online Safety Guidance and Resources for K-12 Schools.

**What We Do to Combat Child Exploitation and Abuse**

**Victim Identification and Rescue**

• The CEIU Victim Identification Program (VIP) utilizes state-of-the-art technologies combined with traditional investigative techniques to identify and rescue child victims of sexual exploitation throughout the world. Since its establishment in 2011, the VIP has identified and/or rescued more than 9,000 child victims of sexual exploitation.

• S&T develops and deploys leading-edge forensic tools and technologies that enable CEIU agents and analysts, and other national and international law enforcement partners, to identify and locate child victims of online sexual exploitation. These tools include live-stream capabilities, advanced facial-recognition technologies, and speech and language tools.

**Victim Protection and Support**

• DHS is incorporating a victim-centered approach into all Department programs, policies, and operations that involve victims of crime. This effort seeks to minimize additional trauma, mitigate undue penalization, and provide needed stability and support to victims.

• The HSI Victim Assistance Program (VAP) supports child victims of abuse and sexual exploitation by providing emergency services and crisis response, and arranging short- and long-term direct services like legal representation, mental health treatment, and NGO support.

• S&T is working to ensure that child victims of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking are reintegrated and rehabilitated using trauma-informed, person-centered best practices.

• USCIS provides long-term immigration protections to child victims of human trafficking, abuse, and neglect, including Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) classification, T visa, U visa, and VAWA protection.

• HSI provides short-term immigration protections to human trafficking victims, including victims of child sex trafficking.

**Operations and Enforcement**

• CEIU’s Operation Predator targets child sexual predators, including producers, distributors, and receivers of child sexual abuse material on both the clear web and dark web. Since 2003, more than 33,000 individuals have been arrested as part of Operation Predator.
• USSS provides forensic and technical assistance to NCMEC and state/local law enforcement in cases involving missing and exploited children. This assistance includes polygraph examinations coordinated with Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces, audio and video enhancement to identify and locate victims and perpetrators, speaker recognition, fingerprint analysis, and GIS analysis to help locate missing children.

• The CEIU Angel Watch Center—a joint effort with CBP and the U.S. Marshals Service—combats transnational child sexual abuse by identifying child sex offenders who attempt to travel internationally for the purpose of sexually abusing or exploiting minors and alerting foreign law enforcement to offenders’ pending arrival.

• CEIU’s Operation Dark Angel complements the work of the Angel Watch Center, leveraging advanced investigative and intelligence capacities and HSI special agents around the globe to target transnational child sexual abusers.

• S&T develops cutting-edge tools and technologies to arm domestic and international law enforcement partners with advanced forensic capabilities to identify and apprehend child sexual abusers.

• S&T works with Five Country Ministerial partners to align child exploitation R&D efforts, share innovative digital forensics tools, and test and evaluate emerging counter-child exploitation technologies.

• CEIU supports NCMEC operations and the Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section with full-time HSI liaisons. CEIU also serves as a leading member of nearly a dozen national and international law enforcement working groups and R&D task forces aimed at developing tools and best practices to protect children from sexual abuse.

Screening

• U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) screens all unaccompanied children and other arriving minors for indicators of abuse or exploitation, human trafficking, and other crimes, and all suspected criminal cases are referred to HSI.

• DHS is developing screening protocols and methods across the Department for DHS personnel to identify and report child exploitation in their day-to-day duties.

Public Education and Outreach

• USSS, in partnership with NCMEC, operates the Childhood Smart Program (CSP) to education parents, teachers, and children about safe use of the internet, abduction-prevention strategies, and combatting child sex trafficking (CST).

• HSI operates Project iGuardian in partnership with NCMEC NetSmartz and the ICAC Task Forces to educate kids, teens, parents, and teachers throughout the country about online safety and how to stay safe from sexual predators.

• The HSI Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Unit operates a robust education and outreach program aimed at protecting young girls from female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), a severe form of child abuse. This effort includes Operation Limelight USA (OLLUSA), an outreach program conducted at international airports across the United States to educate the traveling public about the dangers of FGM/C, the criminal framework prohibiting travel for the purpose of FGM/C, survivor resources, and contact information for reporting a child who may be at risk.
What You Can Do

- If you suspect a child might be a victim of online exploitation, call the HSI Tip Line at 1-866-347-2423 and fill out the online NCMEC CyberTipline form at https://report.cybertip.org/.
- If you suspect a child has been abducted or faces imminent danger, contact your local police and the NCMEC tip line at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).
- Visit the HSI iGuardians website for useful tips, online resources, and contact information, as well as information for outreach presentations aimed at online safety for kids, teens, and parents at https://www.ice.gov/topics/iGuardians.
- Raise awareness of human trafficking, including child sex and forced labor trafficking, in your community using DHS Blue Campaign resources on DHS.gov/BlueCampaign. Follow DHS Blue Campaign on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter: @DHSBlueCampaign.
- Read the DHS Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, the Importation of Goods Produced with Forced Labor, and Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Familiarize yourself with the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.