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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Sees Continued Increase in CyberTips as Annual Conference on Missing and Exploited Children Kicks Off

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force is working to combat a sustained increase in suspected online child exploitation as the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) kicks off its annual Internet Crimes Against Children Conference on Missing and Exploited Children in Appleton.

“I’m thankful to those who help with the work of the Wisconsin ICAC Task Force for what they do to help keep kids safe,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “This week’s conference is one of only a handful that happen around the country, and we’re glad to be able to provide the opportunity in Wisconsin to share knowledge regarding this important issue.”

In 2025, the task force, led by DOJ, received 19,767 CyberTips. A CyberTip is a report of suspected online child sexual exploitation made to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. From 2021 to 2025, CyberTips grew from 4,671 to 19,767, representing a more than 323 percent increase.

From the start of 2026 through the first week of April 2026, the Wisconsin ICAC Task Force has received more than 5,700 CyberTips. During the first three months of this year the task force, composed of Wisconsin DOJ and more than 340 affiliate agencies across the state, made more than 70 arrests. It made more than 600 arrests in all of 2025 and more than 500 arrests in all of 2024.

The Wisconsin ICAC Task Force continues to see an increase in CyberTips related to sextortion. There were more than 230 CyberTips related to sextortion in all of 2024 and more than 650 CyberTips related to sextortion in all of 2025. From the start of 2026 through the first week of April there have been more than 230 CyberTips related to sextortion.

DOJ receives all CyberTips for the state of Wisconsin and refers many out to local law enforcement ICAC affiliates, comprising law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, and nonprofit organizations. The task force works to investigate and prosecute crimes against children that involve the internet, social media, and digital devices.

Electronic Storage Detection (ESD) Canines

At the task force's disposal are ten electronic storage detection (ESD) canines. The canines help locate hidden digital devices during searches and may provide comfort to victims during interviews and court proceedings. DOJ currently has two of the ESD canines, Moose and Granger. Moose was DOJ's only ESD canine in 2025 and he located 24 ESDs.

ICAC Conference on Missing and Exploited Children

DOJ's annual Internet Crimes Against Children Conference on Missing and Exploited Children this year takes place April 14-16. The conference provides nationwide training to expand the efforts, knowledgebase and skills of law enforcement investigators who are combating the online sexual exploitation of children.

The conference will be attended by more than 375 professionals from Wisconsin, 23 other states, and Canada, including law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Their participation reflects Wisconsin's leadership in strengthening the response to online child exploitation.

The conference offers sessions that highlight critical topics, such as multidisciplinary teams, advanced investigative techniques, digital forensics, victim services, employee mental wellness, and emerging threats. One of those emerging threats continues to be sextortion. Sextortion is a form of sexual exploitation where the offender threatens to release compromising material of the victim unless the victim sends money, gift cards, and/or additional sexual content, or engages in sexual activity.

The task force has compiled the below resources for parents and their kids on how to stay safe online.

Tips For Teens Who May Be Victims of Sextortion

- Remember, it's not your fault!
- It's never too late to get help. Tell a parent or trusted adult right away.
- Do not pay money or comply with the blackmailer's requests.
- Report the account through the platform's safety feature.
- Block the suspect, but DO NOT DELETE the messages or your profile to preserve potential evidence for law enforcement.
- Report the crime to law enforcement or at CyberTipLine.com.

Online Safety Tips for Parents

The best way parents can protect children online is through creating and maintaining open lines of communication. Prepare your children for the online world by talking to them about dangers and risks online, as well as their online activity, including the websites they are visiting, the people they are communicating with, the information they are posting about themselves, and any situations that make them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. The Wisconsin ICAC Task Force offers a monthly newsletter for the public on internet related safety information. You can register at Wisconsin Department of Justice - Wisconsin ICAC Task Force Community/Parent Newsletter. Additional resources can be found on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's website <https://www.missingkids.org/home>.

Report Online Concerns

If you or someone you know has information on potential child exploitation, you can report it to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children online at cybertipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678.

About the Wisconsin ICAC Task Force

The Wisconsin ICAC Task Force is part of a nationwide network of 61 task forces and is led by DOJ's Division of Criminal Investigation. The Wisconsin ICAC Task Force offers a variety of services including investigation and prosecution of offenders of internet crime, investigative and prosecutorial assistance for police agencies and prosecutors, victim services, training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, and coordination of internet safety education for parents, teachers and community members.