

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)?

Answer: NCMEC is a non-profit 501(3)(c) charitable organization and the leading organization in the country dealing with the issues of missing children and sexually exploited children. It was established by Congress in 1984 and at the request of the U.S. Congress, NCMEC performs nineteen separate programs and services including serving as the nation's clearinghouse for information, operating a national, toll-free, 24-hour missing children's hotline, operating the CyberTipline which is the nation's 9-1-1 for the internet, among many others.

Is the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children a government agency?

Answer: No, it is a non-profit charitable organization. However, NCMEC has a close working relationship with the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Secret Service and other federal agencies. The organization works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

What is the mission of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children?

Answer: The mission of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) is to find missing children; eliminate child sexual exploitation; identify those who prey upon children and help bring them to justice; prevent the victimization of children; and assist the victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them.

Does the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children accept donations?

Answer: Yes, donations, gifts and in-kind services are an important source of funding for NCMEC.

How many missing children are there?

Answer: The problem of missing children is complex and multifaceted. Children may become missing due to abduction by nonfamily members or abduction by family members. Children may be missing as a result of running away from home. Children may also be missing involuntarily for reasons other than abduction, due to becoming lost, injured or otherwise missing to their parents or guardians. The best national estimates for the number of missing children are found in the *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMAART-2)*, released in October 2002. According to *NISMAART-2*, an estimated

- 800,000 children younger than 18 are missing each year, or an average of 2,000 children reported missing each day;
- 200,000 children were abducted by family members;
- 58,000 children were abducted by nonfamily members; and
- 115 children were the victims of "stereotypical" kidnapping. These crimes involve someone the child does not know, or knows only slightly, who holds the child overnight, transports the child 50 miles or more, kills the child, demands ransom, or intends to keep the child permanently.

For more information on missing children and *NISMART-2*, please visit the Media section at www.missingkids.com.

Are many missing children found deceased? What hours are most critical when trying to locate a missing child?

Answer: According to a 1997 study, *Case Management for Missing Children Homicide Investigation*, the murder of an abducted child is a rare event; an estimated 100 such incidents occur in the United States each year. However, the study further found that 76.2 percent of abducted children who are murdered are dead within three hours of the abduction.

REFERENCE: For more information on the *Case Management for Missing Children Homicide Investigation*, please visit the FAQs and Statistics section at www.missingkids.com.

How many missing children are recovered?

Answer: Over the past 25 years more than 169,000 children have been recovered. In 2007 more children came home safely than any time in U.S. history, raising the recovery rate from 62 percent in 1990 to 97 percent in 2011.

Do the posters I see and the cards I get in the mail really help recover missing children?

Answer: Absolutely. These posters reach millions and prompt citizens across the country to call NCMEC's missing children's hotline and provide vital leads and information, many of which lead to the recovery of missing children.

Does NCMEC put pictures of missing kids on milk cartons?

Answer: NCMEC does not post photographs of missing children on milk cartons, but NCMEC photo partners may do so. Today, NCMEC distributes photographs through a network of nearly 400 private-sector photo partners nationwide. The largest distributors of NCMEC's missing child photographs include the Valassis program that reaches more than 100 million homes per week; bulletin boards in every Walmart store; *USA Today's* weekly missing child photograph; weekly missing child features on CNN; features of missing children on every newscast, every day on WABC-TV in New York; broadcast fax distribution via LexisNexis' Adam program; and many others

Is "stranger danger"—that dangers to kids come from strangers—really a myth?

Yes. In the majority of cases, the perpetrator is someone the parents or child knows, and that person may be in a position of trust or responsibility to the child and family.

We have learned that children do not have the same understanding of who a stranger is as an adult might; therefore, it is a difficult concept for the child to grasp. It is much more beneficial to children to help them build the confidence and self-esteem they need to stay as safe as possible in any potentially dangerous situation they encounter rather than teaching them to be "on the look out" for a particular type of person.

For decades, parents, guardians, and teachers have told children to "stay away from strangers" in an effort to keep them safe. In response to the on-going debate about the effectiveness of such programs, NCMEC released the research-based [Guidelines for Programs to Reduce Child Victimization: A Resource for Communities When Choosing a Program to Teach Personal Safety to Children](#) to assist schools as they select curricula aimed at reducing crimes against children.

For more information on child safety, please visit the More Publications section at www.missingkids.com. Pay particular attention to *Child Safety Is More Than A Slogan; Child Protection*; and *Guidelines for Programs to Reduce Child Victimization: A Resource for Communities When Choosing a Program to Teach Personal Safety to Children*.

What does NCMEC do to combat child sexual exploitation?

Answer: NCMEC is a leader in the fight against child sexual exploitation. For example,

- NCMEC operates the CyberTipline (“the 9-1-1 for the Internet”), and has handled more than 1,200,000 reports of online enticement of children, child pornography, child prostitution, child sex tourism, child molestation, and other offenses, resulting in the arrest and successful prosecution of thousands of offenders.
- NCMEC’s CyberTipline is the central reporting mechanism for the nation’s Internet Service Providers, who report to law enforcement via NCMEC when they discover child pornography on their systems.
- NCMEC operates the Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP), an effort in collaboration with law enforcement, to identify and rescue children being sexually abused and seen in child pornography. CVIP staff have reviewed and analyzed more than 56 million child pornography images and videos, and have assisted law enforcement and prosecutors with more than 178,000 cases.
- NCMEC’s Exploited Child Division (ECD) provides technical assistance to law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in child exploitation investigations, and serves as a resource center for parents, law enforcement, and the general public on the issues of sexual exploitation of children.
- NCMEC’s Family Advocacy Division (FAD) provides technical assistance, referrals, and crisis-intervention services to families, law enforcement, and family advocacy agencies. The FAD also provides support, appropriate referrals, and follow-up on cases of extra-familial exploitation. FAD staff is comprised of social-service and law-enforcement professionals.

Additionally, NCMEC has launched a series of national advertising campaigns to raise awareness about child sexual exploitation. *Don’t Believe the Type*; *HDOP: Help Delete Online Predators*; *We’re Here Because They’re Out There*; and *Know the Rules* not only educate parents, guardians, and children about online sexual predators, child molestation, and child pornography, the programs provide both kids and adults with tools to help prevent and combat these crimes.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Justice partnered with NCMEC and the Advertising Council, Inc. to create a series of public service announcements (PSAs) designed to raise awareness about the dangers of online child sexual exploitation. The campaign, “Think Before You Post,” released

in 2007, targets teenage girls and urges them to protect themselves by not posting images or information that might put them at risk for online victimization.

For more information about NCMEC services and NCMEC campaign initiatives, please visit the More Services and More Campaigns sections at www.missingkids.com.

How can suspected child sexual exploitation be reported to the CyberTipline?

Answer: You can make a report to NCMEC's CyberTipline by visiting www.CyberTipline.com or calling 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678). NCMEC handles reports on the following types of child sexual exploitation: the possession, manufacture, and distribution of child pornography; the online enticement of children for sex acts; child prostitution; child sex-tourism; child molestation (not in the family); unsolicited obscene material sent to a child; and misleading domain names. Reports may be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What happens to my CyberTipline report after it is submitted to NCMEC?

Answer: Every report is analyzed by staff members in the ECD and provided to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and/or state and local law enforcement. The agency then reviews the report and determines if further action is needed. In some cases, reports are also forwarded to Internet service providers, who can help law enforcement in their investigations.

How big of a problem is child sexual exploitation?

Answer: Sexual victimization of children is an enormous problem that is largely unrecognized and underreported. Statistics show that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys are sexually victimized in some way before they reach adulthood, yet just 1 in 3 report their victimization.

For more information on child sexual exploitation, please visit the More Publications section at www.missingkids.com. Be sure to read *Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children* and *Parental Guidelines in Case Your Child Might Someday be the Victim of Sexual Exploitation*.

How many children are sexually solicited and/or approached online?

Answer: According to *Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later*, conducted by the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, approximately 1 in 7 youths (10- to 17-year-olds) who used the Internet received an online sexual solicitation or approach.

For more information on Internet exploitation and *Online Victimization of Youth*, please visit the More Publications section at www.missingkids.com.

All publications listed under the Reference sections can also be obtained by calling
1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)