

# ONLINE ENTICEMENT INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN



## THE THREAT – ONLINE ENTICEMENT AND GROOMING

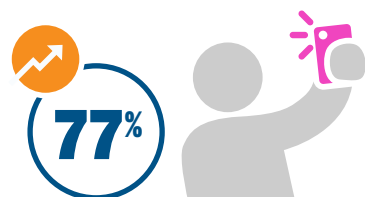
**Online enticement** involves an online predator communicating with someone they believe to be a child on the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offense or abduction.

Online enticement may involve grooming, a process by which an online predator establishes a connection with a minor by offering support and attention to gain their trust, gathers personal information about them, desensitizes them to sexual content by introducing sexually explicit conversation and pornographic imagery and exploits any vulnerabilities the child may have. They then use the material to coerce children and teens into sending more graphic images and videos or a ransom. In some cases, the objective of the online predator is to coerce the child or teen to meet face-to-face for illegal sexual purposes. This type of victimization can take place across gaming and social media platforms and messaging apps.

In 2023, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) reported **186,819 CyberTip reports** for online enticement of children. This is a **300% increase** from 2021. For even greater comparison for this threat, in 2019 there were only 19,100 online enticement reports<sup>1</sup>.



Online enticement and grooming has also contributed to a rise in “self-generated” sexual content. “Self-generated” sexual content can include when a predator compels children or teens to record, photograph, or livestream themselves engaging in sexual activity and share that imagery. This material could be considered child sexual abuse material (CSAM).



**increase in self-generated child sexual abuse content** between 2019-2020.

The Internet Watch Foundation reported a **77% increase** in self-generated child sexual abuse content between 2019 to 2020<sup>2</sup>. Producing and sharing self-generated CSAM is becoming increasingly common according to survey participants, with **1 in 5 teenage girls** and **1 in 10 teenage boys** reporting they had shared nude images of themselves<sup>3</sup>.

Predators also exploit technical vulnerabilities of gaming and social media platforms to target victims for the purpose of online enticement and grooming. Children and

teens who remove privacy settings and enable geolocation on their gaming and social media platforms can easily fall victims to those predators<sup>4</sup>.

The online enticement and grooming period can be very short. Some victims report chatting with offenders for less than an hour before being asked to send sexually explicit images and videos of themselves. Law enforcement has even seen a grooming period **as short as 19 seconds**. Because children today may feel more comfortable chatting and sending images and videos over the internet, the length of time it takes for a predator to elicit and successfully receive imagery can be only minutes.

### The most common grooming tactics of an online predator include:

- Developing a rapport through compliments, discussing shared interests, or “liking” their online posts
- Incentivizing children or teens to send sexual pictures or videos of themselves in exchange for money, gifts, e-gifts or in-game credits
- Sending or offering sexually explicit images of themselves
- Pretending to be a similar age
- Pretending to be a classmate or someone from a nearby school

## DHS RESPONSE TO THE THREAT OF ONLINE ENTICEMENT

The best protection against online enticement is raising awareness of the threat to help parents and youth understand and recognize these dangerous situations and report it to law enforcement when it happens. **Know2Protect®: Together We Can Stop Child Exploitation** educates and empowers children, teens, parents, trusted adults and policymakers to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA); explain how to report online enticement and victimization; and offer response and support resources for victims and survivors of online child sexual exploitation and their supporters.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.missingkids.org>

<sup>2</sup> <https://annualreport2020.iwf.org.uk/trends/international/selfgenerated>

<sup>3</sup> [https://info.thorn.org/hubfs/Research/Responding%20to%20Online%20Threats\\_2021-Full-Report.pdf?utm\\_campaign=H2D%20report&utm\\_source=website](https://info.thorn.org/hubfs/Research/Responding%20to%20Online%20Threats_2021-Full-Report.pdf?utm_campaign=H2D%20report&utm_source=website)

<sup>4</sup> <https://childsafety.lasangelescriminallawyer.pro/children-and-grooming-online-predators.html>

## TOP TEN TIPS2PROTECT FOR TEENS

1. Set all apps, games, social media accounts and devices to private.
2. Turn off location data services on social media and all apps, except the ones your family uses to keep track of where you are. Talk to a trusted adult about which apps need location services and which don't.
3. Remember, anything posted online can be found later, even if it's deleted. After it's sent, you can't take it back.
4. Don't believe that everyone is who they say they are online.
5. Know who is on your friend lists. Remove strangers. Only accept friends you know in real life.
6. Never leave a game to chat on a different platform with someone you don't know.
7. Don't respond to messages or requests from people you don't know.
8. If something happens that makes you feel uncomfortable or you feel like something's just not right, tell an adult you trust, such as a parent, relative, teacher or family friend.
9. Do not delete messages or images. Save usernames, screenshots and images as evidence.
10. Don't panic. You're not alone. There are many ways you can get help.

## TO SUBMIT A REPORT

- Call the Know2Protect Tipline at **833-591-KNOW (5669)**. All information received via the Tipline will be reviewed by appropriate personnel and referred to Homeland Security Investigations field offices for potential investigation.
- Contact your local, state, or tribal law enforcement officials directly. **Call 911 in an emergency.**