



U.S. Department of Justice

Stephen R. McAllister

United States Attorney

District of Kansas

Kansas City Office
500 State Avenue
Suite 360
Kansas City, Kansas 66101-2433

Wichita Office
1200 Epic Center
301 N. Main
Wichita, Kansas 67202-4812

TEL: (913) 551-6730
FAX: (913) 551-6541

Topeka Office
444 SE Quincy
Suite 290
Topeka, Kansas 66683-3592

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Dear Commissioner Watson and Kansas Educators:

As the United States Attorney for the District of Kansas and the Special Agent in Charge for the Kansas City Division of the FBI, which includes Kansas, one of our highest priorities is the protection of children. Our young people today face more online threats than ever, and that was true before the Kansas schools closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, children are likely spending even more time online each day, which gives predators more opportunities to exploit them. In this new environment, we want to remind educators, parents, caregivers, and children about the dangers of online sexual exploitation, urge the adults to watch for the signs of such exploitation and abuse, and to report to and engage federal and state law enforcement authorities when exploitation and abuse are suspected or discovered.

As educators, you know that children sometimes can be too trusting online and befriend people they may not know. Predators take advantage of this and target children, often between the ages of 10 and 17, typically through social media. Children across all demographics and genders can be targeted and exploited. Sexual exploitation, even when there is never any physical contact, causes very real harm and has a lasting impact. Images and videos do not disappear from the Internet, and the long term effects can be devastating.

Online sexual exploitation can come in many forms. One particularly pernicious form is sextortion, which occurs when a predator entices a victim into providing sexually explicit images or videos—usually by falsely pretending to be a teen, someone much younger and different than their real identity—and then threatens to share the images publicly if the victim fails to comply with the predator's demands for increasingly explicit and degrading images and videos. In order for such

victimization to stop, children typically need adult intervention and assistance. They have to confide in someone they trust—a parent, teacher, friend, or caregiver—who can help them cut off the communications and report the situation to law enforcement, which will permit us to pursue the predator.

We encourage you to review the resources regarding child exploitation and other crimes related to COVID-19 at <https://www.fbi.gov/coronavirus>. If you suspect or become aware of possible sexual exploitation of a child, please contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation (<https://tips.fbi.gov>), the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (<https://www.kbi.ks.gov/sar>), or your local law enforcement agency and report it. Such exploitation is a serious federal crime carrying severe federal penalties.

Together, during the pandemic, federal law enforcement has aggressively investigated and prosecuted COVID-19 related crimes such as fraud, price-gouging and hoarding of essential medical supplies. But we stand ready to act just as aggressively against those who might seek to take advantage of this situation to exploit our children.

Sincerely,

s/Stephen R. McAllister
Stephen R. McAllister
United States Attorney
District of Kansas

s/Timothy R. Langan
Timothy R. Langan
Special Agent in Charge
Kansas City Division, FBI