Survivors of child sexual abuse but still victims of their imagery: NCMEC’s Victim Services Initiative

Shannon Traore & Adrienne Hoffman-Lewis
WHO WE ARE

• Founded in 1984
• Nonprofit, non-governmental organization
• Congressionally funded in part to operate 22 programs related to missing & exploited children
• National clearing house & resource center for families, law enforcement and other professionals
OUR MISSION

Find missing children
Reduce child sexual exploitation
Prevent future victimization

HOPE IS WHY WE’RE HERE
PREVENTING FUTURE VICTIMIZATION

- Data-driven
- NCMEC’s unique lens allows our safety programs to reflect evolving risks
- Designed to empower children, families and communities

SAFE TO COMPETE:
Protecting Child Athletes From Sexual Abuse
When do children need to know about their victimization?  
What do they remember?  
What if the notifications process impacts their decision?  
Parent vs child decisions for notifications  
What imagery is distributed?  
What do your clients think is out there?  
Victim centered crimes but don’t know the victimization
AFTER THE ARREST

• While the sexual exploitation has stopped, the CSAI is still online and in circulation
• Possible continued risks:
  » Mental Health
    • Lack of control over/knowledge of who has seen the images and videos
    • Impact of images and videos on developing personal and romantic relationships
    • Impact of images and videos on future opportunities (jobs, schools, etc.)
  » Personal Safety
    • After child’s identification and rescue, offenders still follow his/her story and in real life
Must include victims of online child sexual exploitation material

Children in these files ARE victims
» Not all activity and not all depictions may meet the legal definition
» Not all offenders can be identified, charged and prosecuted

Children in these files FEEL victimized
» Embarrassment
» Shame
» Regret

Youth-produced imagery has confused the issue
» Self-Production vs Online Enticement
» Victim-blaming
» Lack of or delayed assistance and resources in these cases

The internet is forever…until now
» Advances in technology can now limit copies of files in circulation
» We can change how we respond to survivors

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION
SURVIVORS’ SURVEY

To learn about survivors’ experiences and from those, develop policy, legislative and therapeutic changes to better meet their needs

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

- **Reduce**
  - the availability of child sexual abuse images and videos on the public internet

- **Improve**
  - education and training on issue of CSA among professionals

- **Strengthen**
  - coordination and communication between all systems and entities that intersect

- **Develop**
  - comprehensive systems and remedies to properly recognize the rights and unique needs of victims whose abuse was recorded
GET HELP NOW: REMOVING CONTENT

http://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/isyourexPLICITcontentoutthere
POST EVENT FINDINGS: WHAT DO WE KNOW

• We need more resources, training and education to MHP
• We need multidisciplinary approach to this issue
• Multiple types of therapy and modalities often needed to tackle the complex trauma layers in one client
• FINDING those practitioners is more of the challenge
• Important to discuss impact of imagery in therapy but use of imagery in investigation may cause difficulties
• Notification process can cause revictimization
• Measures of trauma symptoms are relevant but only one way to measure progress
LESSONS LEARNED

• Recording the sexual abuse of a child has a significant, lifelong impact on the victim
• Most victims were abused from a young age, by a family member for some, continuing into adulthood
• We should not rely on disclosure alone to stop child sexual abuse
• Many survivors reported multiple offenders and/or multiple children involved in their sexual abuse
• Are the unique needs of survivors of child sexual abuse imagery being adequately addressed?

From Survivors’ Survey Executive Summary 2017 by Canadian Centre for Child Protection
WHAT WE DON’T KNOW

1. What would a standardized assessment tool look like?
2. How does the brain/body/trauma research help us with treatment planning?
3. What are the short and long term effects of showing survivors an image of abuse in an investigation or therapeutic context?
4. How do mental health professionals develop a treatment plan?
5. How do we find more victims of child sexual abuse imagery?
There is a lot I don't remember, but now I can't forget because the disgusting images of what he did to me are still out there on the Internet.

It hurts me to know someone is looking at them -- at me -- when I was just a little girl being abused for the camera. I did not choose to be there, but now I am there forever in pictures that people are using to do sick things. I want it all erased. I want it all stopped. But I am powerless to stop it just like I was powerless to stop my uncle.
EMPOWERING, SUPPORTING & ASSISTING FAMILIES with the Trauma of Child Sexual Exploitation and Recovery
Support
NCMEC provides assistance to families who need help coping with a missing or sexually exploited child. We offer crisis intervention to families as well as local referrals to appropriate professionals for longer-term support.

Legal Assistance
Child victims may be eligible for restitution. NCMEC helps families navigate the legal system and provides referrals to experienced attorneys.

Peer & Emotional Connection
Families of exploited children often feel alone in their struggle and overwhelmed by the issues impacting their lives. NCMEC’s Team HOPE volunteer program connects families to others who have experienced the crisis of a sexually exploited child. These trained volunteers offer peer support, coping skills and compassion.

Reduce Content Online
NCMEC helps families reduce the availability of a child’s sexually exploitative content online by working closely with technology companies and providing information for families to reach out directly to the companies.

Team HOPE has truly been a blessing in my life. Having a child who has been exploited, you feel so alone. Knowing that there is someone out there... helped me with my healing.
– Parent of a sexually exploited child

For more information, contact 1-877-446-2632 ext. 6117 or familysupport@ncmec.org
EMPODERAMOS, APOYAMOS & ASISTIMOS A LAS FAMILIAS ante el Trauma de la Explotación Sexual y la Recuperación
Apoyo
El NCMEC brinda asistencia a las familias que necesitan ayuda con un niño desaparecido o que fue víctima de explotación sexual. Ofrecemos a las familias intervención para casos de crisis así como remisiones locales a los profesionales adecuados para que reciban apoyo a largo plazo.

Asistencia legal
Los menores que han sido víctimas pueden ser elegibles para la restitución. El NCMEC ayuda a las familias a recorrer el sistema legal y las pone en contacto con abogados experimentados.

Conexión emocional y con pares
Las familias de los niños que han sido explotados suelen sentirse solas en su lucha y abrumadas por los problemas que afectan su vida. El programa voluntario Team HOPE del NCMEC conecta a las familias con otras personas que han pasado por la experiencia de crisis que significa tener un niño que ha sido víctima de explotación sexual. Estos voluntarios están debidamente capacitados para ofrecer compasión, apoyo de pares y habilidades para sobrellevar la situación.

Reducción del contenido en línea
El NCMEC ayuda a las familias a reducir la disponibilidad del contenido que pueda haber en línea sobre la explotación sexual del menor. Para ello, trabaja en conjunto con empresas de tecnología y proporciona información a las familias para que se comuniquen directamente con las empresas correspondientes.

Team HOPE ha sido una verdadera bendición en mi vida. Tener un niño que ha sido víctima de explotación hace que uno se sienta tan solo. Saber que hay alguien en quien confiar... me ayudó en mi recuperación.
– Padre de un niño víctima de explotación sexual

Para más información, póngase en contacto con nosotros.
1-877-446-2632 ext. 6117 o familysupport@ncmec.org

Copyright © 2018 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Todos los derechos reservados.