

November 2, 2021

Shalanda Young  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
Executive Office of the President  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

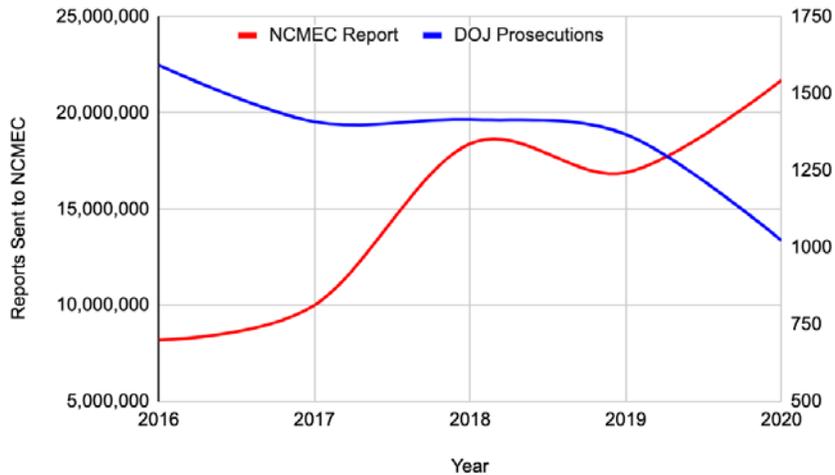
Dear Director Young,

The undersigned organizations respectfully write to you to request robust increases for FY 2023 for accounts that assist in combating Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (OSEAC). OSEAC is one of the fastest growing crimes and threats against children. The [US Sentencing Commission's October 2021 report](#), which studied child sexual abuse image producers, found that OSEAC has increased by 422% over the last fifteen years. [From 2019 to 2020](#), CyberTips submitted to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) of suspected OSEAC and child sexual abuse materials (CSAM), dramatically rose from 16.9 million reports to 21.7 million reports, which included 65.4 million photographs, videos and files. According to a [recent report by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#), 78% of images and videos of online child sexual exploitation depicted children under 12 years old, and 63% of those children were younger than eight years old. [Many of these children](#) are infants and toddlers who are enduring horrific, abusive acts.

Online sexual exploitation and abuse of children has drastically increased in part due to the rise of social media and lack of privacy protections online. Perpetrators and abusers reach children through apps, websites, and video game platforms to gain children's trust and groom them for eventual abuse and exploitation. Communities across the country and internationally must be equipped with the necessary resources and professional training, in order to adequately prevent and respond to the victimization of children on the internet.

Some of the most recent growth can also be attributed to the [Covid-19 pandemic](#), which created a perfect storm that increased children's risk of experiencing OSEAC. In the last year, the world shifted to an online environment with teleworking and remote learning. Unfortunately, predators have used this as an opportunity to further target children. The methods and platforms used to groom children are constantly evolving and adapting to the online world we live in today, forcing law enforcement, government agencies, and NGOs working to prevent and respond to OSEAC to similarly change their tactics and tools in response.

## Reports to NCMEC and DOJ Prosecutions



[Source](#)

Despite the rapid rise in reports of suspected OSEAC and child sexual abuse materials over the past decade, the number of federal prosecutions has actually fallen. In addition to the staggering numbers above, over 325,000 suspect leads sit in Department of Justice funded databases but are not being worked.<sup>1</sup> Based on multiple studies over the last decade, between [50-80% of these suspects](#) are also likely to be committing hands-on offenses against children in their communities.

A [recent report released by Protect Children](#), an NGO based in Helsinki, Finland, whose work focuses on protecting children from all forms of sexual violence, gives unique insight into offenders and consumers of CSAM on the dark web. The report evaluated survey responses from users who used certain key words associated with CSAM searches. Self-reports revealed insight into content preferences, including girls aged 4-13 (45%); violent, sadistic, and brutal material (24%); boys aged 4-13 (18%); other violent material (7%); and infants and toddlers aged 0-3 (6%). Consistent with other studies, the report shows that CSAM users are not just viewers. In fact, many survey respondents reported the risk of perpetrating hands-on offenses or directly contacting children, and 37% admitted to seeking out direct contact with children after viewing CSAM. Another increasing and disturbing trend is the consumption of livestreamed CSAM, which 45% of respondents admitted to watching.

Perpetrators are also often known to the child victim. According to the [US Sentencing Commission's report](#), "Of the 512 child pornography production offenders sentenced in fiscal year 2019, 60.3 percent were related to or otherwise maintained a position of trust over the minor victim, whether through familial relationships or by virtue of the offender's role as a teacher or a coach." With limited resources, United States law enforcement agencies are increasingly unable to adequately prioritize and respond to the rapidly growing number of

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Justice, ICAC Child Online Protection System; 2021.

CyberTips and are unable to proactively work cases of child sexual exploitation in their own jurisdiction.

We ask for robust increases to the accounts below and for substantial funding to be allocated to protect children from these crimes and help end the cycle of abuse and trauma that they ultimately face. Funding for a holistic, multi-faceted, and multidisciplinary approach is critical to ending OSEAC. Children throughout the country and globally deserve to be safe from harm, and we must work to protect them from those that wish to exploit and abuse them.

### **Missing and Exploited Children Programs - at least \$120 million**

We request at least \$120 million for Missing and Exploited Children programs. Funding for this account is split between the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force program, under the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice Dependency Prevention (OJJDP), as well as the AMBER Alert system, the Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Center and the Missing and Exploited Children Office. These offices and programs support coordination between states and the federal government on cases related to missing, exploited and abused children, including cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse. This funding request aligns with the President's Budget Request for FY22 and reflects the dire need for increased funding to respond to the exponential growth in OSEAC and protect children online and offline.

#### *National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) - \$40 million*

We request the full authorized funding amount of \$40 million, in accordance with the Missing Children's Assistance Act, for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). NCMEC serves as the U.S.'s national missing children's clearinghouse and also operates the CyberTipline, which receives reports from internet service providers and the public of suspected OSEAC and child sexual abuse material. NCMEC then refers these reports to international, federal and state law enforcement agencies for investigation.

Funding for NCMEC is critical, as it plays a crucial role in assisting the government in supporting and protecting vulnerable children. In 2020, reports made to NCMEC's CyberTipline increased by 28% from 2019. To date, the tipline has registered 1,400 companies, which referred 21.4 of the 21.7 million online child exploitation reports in 2020. These increases can in part be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic in which children have experienced increased levels of victimization online. As a result of Covid-19 related restrictions, internet usage in the U.S. increased by about [50% amongst children aged 6-12](#). In addition to children spending more time online than ever before, there has also been a [rise in offender activity](#) leading to increased risk of children being targeted. Therefore, it is vitally important NCMEC receives full funding in order to respond to these growing risks. Additional funding will ensure NCMEC is able to continue its vital work in combating OSEAC and protecting children from further victimization.

#### *Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program (ICAC) - \$60 million*

We request full funding in the amount of \$60 million for the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program (ICAC), as authorized under the PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008, which was originally led by then-Senator Biden. ICAC is a national network of state and local law enforcement agencies. As children continue to face increased vulnerabilities, we must respond by ensuring sustainable solutions are not only developed, but also meet the needs of agencies to respond to technological advances that allow for the victimization of children. According to the [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#), “since the ICAC program’s inception in 1998, more than 768,800 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other professionals have been trained on techniques to investigate and prosecute ICAC related cases.” ICAC Task Forces have reviewed more than 1,114,000 reports of online child exploitation, resulting in the arrest of more than 108,300 suspects.” In order to effectively protect children from the many harms that exist on the internet, we must ensure robust funding for the ICAC Task Force Program. ICAC’s Training and Technical Assistance Program supports the following providers: SEARCH, National White Collar Crime Center, Innocence Justice Foundation, Fox Valley Technical College and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Additional funding will help to ensure the continuity of vital training to these providers and ensure agencies are able to engage in reactive and proactive investigations, including forensic and criminal investigations.

### **Victims of Child Abuse Programs - \$50 million**

We request \$50 million for programs related to the implementation of the Victims of Child Abuse Act. These programs include Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), which provide support services to around [200,000 child survivors of abuse](#), including OSEAC, each year. CACs provide critical, evidence-based, trauma-informed programs that support child survivors’ mental health and aid their recovery. Childhood trauma resulting from abuse and other types of violence has been shown to raise [children’s risk of experiencing lifelong negative effects](#) on their physical and mental health and wellbeing, including depression, substance abuse, heart disease, cancer and stroke. However, these risks can be mitigated when child survivors are provided with comprehensive response services, like those provided by CACs. While CACs are partly funded by the Crime Victims Fund, ever-changing obligation caps for the fund that ebb and flow every year depending on the amount of criminal fines and penalties collected by federal courts, make it difficult for CACs to provide consistent programming and services. Funding for this account allows for CACs throughout the country to continue and maintain their range of vital services regardless of the annual cap. Additional funding will further shore up CACs’ budgets and allow them to expand their services to more child survivors.

### **Crime Victims Fund - Push Congress to Increase the Obligation Cap for FY23**

The Office for Victims of Crime in the Department of Justice oversees and disburses funding from the Crime Victims Fund to states and NGOs to support survivors of crime, including child survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation, through assistance and compensation programs like Child Advocacy Centers. Despite the growing need and demand for these support programs,

Congress has continued to lower the obligation cap for the Crime Victims Fund each fiscal year. In FY21, Congress set the obligation cap at \$2.015 billion, a \$641 million decrease compared to FY20, which was already down from the \$3.353 billion cap in FY19 and the \$4.436 billion cap in FY18. While this decrease was due in large part to the depleting balance of the Crime Victims Fund, it has severely restrained the services and supports that can be provided to survivors. With the passage of the VOCA Fix Act in July and new revenue streams being added to support the Fund, we request for the administration to push Congress to set the obligation cap for FY23 to the maximum amount possible.

## **Homeland Security Investigations including specific funding for Child Exploitation Investigations**

### *Child exploitation investigations - Additional \$100 million*

We request an additional \$100 million be allocated to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) specifically for child exploitation investigations. This funding should be in addition to existing budget allocations for HSI operations, with robust increases dedicated to investigative efforts to increase capacity to interdict child sexual abuse image offenders and identify children seen in these images who remain unidentified. Additionally, we request language that authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to pay an increased rate of basic pay or bonuses to each employee of the Department of Homeland Security holding a position that requires significant cyber skills and that aids in the protection of child exploitation victims and the investigation and prosecution of technology-facilitated crimes against children.

### *Cyber Crimes Center – Robust increases*

We request robust increases for HSI's Cyber Crimes Center. The Cyber Crime Center (C3) includes the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit and the Computer Forensics Unit, as well as the Child Victim Identification Program which analyzes child sexual abuse materials in an effort to identify and rescue children seen in sexually abusive imagery. Additional funding for the Cyber Crimes Center would support the expansion of large scale international CSAM investigations, which historically have interdicted some of the most violent child sex abusers around the globe, some of whom order the live-streaming sexual abuse of children as young as infants and toddlers. C3 also runs the HERO Child Rescue Corps and provides state and local forensic assistance to law enforcement agencies across the US with advanced forensic retrieval techniques. The Cyber Crimes Center works closely with the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces to support online sexual exploitation and abuse of children investigations. Digital evidence plays a critical role in the identification of child victims and offenders, as well as supports criminal prosecutions. With digital technologies and encryption becoming more and more sophisticated and the number of CyberTips of suspected OSEAC continuing to grow exponentially, it is critical for all units of the Cyber Crime Center to receive robust funding to continue developing new tools and techniques to gather critical digital evidence.

### *Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU) – \$30 million*

We request \$30 million for the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU). The CEIU specifically focuses on investigations related to the sexual exploitation of children, including the production and distribution of child sexual abuse materials. CEIU's initiatives include: Operation Predator, which targets offenders, including those that produce child sexual abuse materials; the Virtual Global Taskforce, which supports collaboration between domestic and international law enforcement agencies and private sector partners against online sexual exploitation and abuse; the National Child Victim Identification System, which supports law enforcement's ability to identify victims of sexual exploitation; and the Victim Identification Program, which supports the rescue of children who are depicted in child sexual abuse material. Additional funding would allow for the CEIU to increase the number of investigations it is able to support and expand the above-mentioned programs leading to more victims of online sexual exploitation of children being identified and removed from harmful situations.

### **Child Protection Compacts – \$15 million**

We request \$15 million for the Child Protection Compact (CPC) program. Despite the exponential increase in the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children globally over the past decade, many governments around the world do not have the infrastructure and capacity necessary to adequately respond to and investigate suspected cases. CPCs are \$5 million multi-year commitments between the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (JTIP) and partner governments to collaborate to reduce child trafficking. CPCs support the sustainable development of partner governments' capacity to prevent and respond to child trafficking, including OSEAC. The Philippines, a global OSEAC hotspot, has signed two CPCs. This has supported the government in increasing its capacity to identify victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse, provide effective and appropriate child protective services, identify perpetrators and bring them to justice and improve the prevention of OSEAC. An allocation of at least \$15 million for the CPC program will allow for three more compacts with additional countries.

As organizations working together to eliminate the Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children, we were encouraged by President Biden's own call to action to end sexual violence against children and adolescents in his [Proclamation on Child Abuse Prevention Month](#), this past April. The exponential growth in OSEAC, related both to the rise of social media and lack of privacy protections online and the Covid-19 pandemic, requires a substantial response in government resources to protect children online and offline.

As such, we respectfully urge you to request robust increases for FY23 for the above accounts that assist in combating the Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children. We understand you face difficult budget choices and there are many priorities you must consider, but we strongly believe our children deserve to be one of these priorities. We look forward to working with you and with Congress to secure the funding necessary to combat OSEAC, which will help safeguard children and provide necessary resources to mitigate crimes and threats against

them. This robust increase in funding is an investment not just in combating OSEAC but an investment in our most precious resource — our children.

Sincerely,

ChildFund International  
ECPAT-USA  
Enough is Enough  
Fairplay  
Keeping Children Safe USA  
Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse  
National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE)  
National Children's Alliance  
Protect Young Eyes  
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)  
Shared Hope International  
Thorn  
UNICEF USA