

PRESS RELEASE



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**MADIGAN TOUTS ACHIEVEMENTS OF NEW INTERNET TASK
FORCE IN COMBATING CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN**

***MADIGAN TO DISCUSS ONLINE SAFETY TONIGHT DURING VISIT
TO NAPERVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT 203***

Chicago – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that a task force created by her office’s High Tech Crimes Bureau to combat the online exploitation of children has created a strong network of law enforcement partners to coordinate statewide investigations and prosecutions and has made great strides in educating Illinoisans about the dangers of child predators on the Internet.

In the 17 months since its creation, the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children (I-CAC) task force has investigated more than 300 child exploitation cases and arrested more than 50 individuals on related charges. The task force also has conducted more than 20 educational trainings and created a Web site at www.illinoisicac.org to provide the public with a central source for information on child exploitation.

The Illinois I-CAC task force takes a three-prong approach to accomplishing its goals by coordinating law enforcement from across the state to investigate and prosecute child exploitation cases, providing training for law enforcement, and educating Illinois parents, teachers and students about Internet safety.

“The first year and a half has been a critical time spent organizing partners across the state and establishing the infrastructure for the task force,” Madigan said. “Now that the task force is established, there is a great opportunity to work together as a law enforcement team to crack down on child predators who use the Internet as a tool in seeking out their next victims.”

Madigan’s office received a grant in September 2004 from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to develop the Illinois I-CAC task force. The Illinois program is part of a cooperative nationwide network dedicated to protecting children online.

Madigan said 73 law enforcement agencies now belong to the Illinois I-CAC task force, including the U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Illinois State Police, Illinois Department of Corrections, 51 local police departments and 11 State’s Attorneys Offices. The law enforcement partners have agreed to assist with

investigations of child predators within their jurisdictions, no matter what other agency or jurisdiction referred the complaint.

The Illinois I-CAC task force also is dedicated to providing training for officers from across the state on techniques used in the investigation and prosecution of child predators. Those training sessions cover topics including computer forensics, undercover investigations, officer safety and conducting raids. Madigan's office and the I-CAC task force held four training courses within the last eight months and are planning 20 additional trainings for the coming year.

In July 2005, Madigan hired Michael Sullivan as Deputy Bureau Chief of her High Tech Crimes Bureau. Sullivan, a 27-year veteran of law enforcement and a leading expert on Internet crime, was hired to spearhead the I-CAC program and conduct the trainings.

In addition to the law enforcement sessions, Sullivan conducts Internet safety training seminars for educators, parents and children. Since July 2005, Sullivan has conducted 22 classes across the state in conjunction with various school districts. At least 30 additional educational seminars are planned for 2006.

Madigan is scheduled to join Sullivan this evening in Lisle to address a group of high school administrators and parents from Naperville School District 203 about the importance of protecting children from online predators. The presentation is scheduled to begin at **7 pm. at Kennedy Junior High School, 2929 Green Trails Dr., in Lisle.**

"Computers and the Internet are important tools for our children and provide them with abundant resources. But like any tool, an appropriate amount of parental supervision is needed for our children to safely use the Internet," Madigan said. "Too much technology with too little supervision spells disaster for children and teenagers."

While exploring the Internet, children may be exposed to inappropriate material and conduct on a Web site, through e-mail or in a chat room. Chat rooms pose a particularly serious threat because remote users can carry on conversations anonymously, concealing their true identities. Taking advantage of this anonymity, child predators often make their first contact with victims through chat rooms and instant messages.

"The best defense against inappropriate Internet contact is to educate parents and encourage them to set and discuss family rules for Internet use," Madigan said.

For additional tips on how to protect children from Internet predators, visit www.illinoisicac.org. And to report online child exploitation, please send an e-mail to illinoisicactip@atg.state.il.us or call the CyberTipline at **1- 800-843-5678**.