



May 13, 2009

MADIGAN: CRAIGSLIST TO SHUT DOWN EROTIC SERVICES SECTION

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced an agreement with craigslist that will effectively shut down the "Erotic Services" section of its Web site in the wake of mounting pressure from Madigan's office and other state attorneys general due to overwhelming evidence that craigslist had failed to comply with an earlier agreement to develop an effective screening process that would prevent illegal ads from being posted.

"It's clear to everyone that craigslist's erotic services section was nothing more than an Internet brothel," Madigan said. "I'm encouraged that craigslist has agreed to fundamentally change how they operate and monitor their site. The steps they're taking are the only effective way to prevent the exploitation of women and children."

Craigslist has implemented the following changes effective late May 12, 2009 to:

- Cease accepting erotic services postings;
- Allow all remaining ads posted as of May 12, 2009, to expire within seven days;
- Create a new "adult services" services section;
- Manually review every ad posted to the adult services section;
- Ban nude or graphic photos in the new section.

In the earlier agreement brokered in November 2008 with Madigan and 42 other attorneys general, craigslist initially agreed to crackdown on inappropriate content and illegal activity in its erotic services section. But in April 2009, Madigan sent a letter to craigslist CEO Jim Buckmaster calling on the Web site to shut down the erotic services section due to overwhelming evidence that craigslist had breached the previous agreement by failing to develop an effective screening procedure to stop illegal ads from being posted.

Since November 2008, Attorney General Madigan's office has monitored more than 74,000 erotic services postings in Chicago alone. The research indicates that as many as 600 new ads were being posted on any given day in Chicago. According to the November 2008 agreement, Craigslist would require that posters of erotic services ads provide a working phone number and pay a fee with a valid credit card. Craigslist also agreed to take several steps to crack down on erotic services ad content, including attaching "tags" to the erotic services section that would assist parental screening software and employing "digital tagging" to identify and eliminate inappropriate content so that users could flag ads that violate craigslist's terms of service, which include prohibitions on pornography and criminal activity. Madigan said her office's monitoring established that the Web site had failed to effectively implement those additional screening procedures.

This latest agreement is part of Madigan's ongoing Internet safety initiatives. Madigan's office, through a grant from the Department of Justice, operates the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force, one of 59 task forces nationwide designed to investigate child exploitation crimes and deliver Internet safety education. In 2007, the Illinois ICAC task force provided Internet safety training and education to more than 20,000 parents, children and professionals and responded to more than 575 cyber tips received from National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

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