

# National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

## Children's Rights

<https://www.missingkids.org/ourwork/impact>

## Campaign and Advocacy

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In 1984, John and Rev Walsh and other child advocates founded the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) as a private, non-profit organization to serve as the national clearinghouse and resource center for information about missing and exploited children.

During the last 37 years, our national toll-free hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST, has received more than 5 million calls. We've circulated billions of photos of missing children. We've assisted law enforcement in the recovery of more than 376,000 missing children.

**Every child deserves a safe childhood.**

At NCMEC, hope drives us and fuels our promise to never stop. The threats our kids face are constantly evolving, and we work hard every day to identify those threats and figure out how to better protect children. And while the way we do our work is ever-evolving, our commitment to children will never falter.

Unfortunately, since many children are never reported missing, there is no reliable way to determine the total number of children who are actually missing in the U.S.

When a child is reported missing to law enforcement, federal law requires that child be entered into the FBI's National Crime Information Center, also known as NCIC. According to the FBI, in 2021 there were 337,195 NCIC entries for missing children\*. In 2020, the total number of missing child entries into NCIC was 365,348.

\* This number represents reports of missing children. That means if a child runs away multiple times in a year, each instance would be entered into NCIC separately and counted in the yearly total. Likewise, if an entry is canceled and re-entered, that would also be reflected in the total.

When a child goes missing, NCMEC's call center specialists are trained to help families navigate through some of the worst moments of their lives. These specially-trained operators are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to take reports of missing children, tips from the public about sightings of missing children and reports of suspected child sexual exploitation online.

In 2021, NCMEC's call center received **94,428** calls.

**In 2021, NCMEC assisted law enforcement, families and child welfare with 27,733 cases of missing children.**

### **Children Intaked at NCMEC Between 1/1/2021 and 12/31/2021 Organized by Case Type and Case Status**

Children who run away make up a majority of the missing child cases reported to us. These children are highly vulnerable and face many risks including homelessness, gang involvement and child sex trafficking. See [below](#) for more data related to child sex trafficking.

### **Children Intaked at NCMEC Between 1/1/2021 and 12/31/2021 Organized by Child's Age Group and Race/Ethnicity**

#### **Age Group**

Missing children are reported to us by parents, guardians or law enforcement. With the exception of children missing from care, there is no mandatory reporting of missing children to NCMEC. Below is a breakdown of cases by state reported to NCMEC in 2021. This does not represent all missing children in every state. A large number of cases is not an indication of any issues within a state, but it is an indicator of active reporting of missing children within that state. For all children reported missing in your state, contact your [missing child clearinghouse](#).

### **Children Intaked at NCMEC Between 1/1/2021 and 12/31/2021 Organized by Missing State and Case Status**

**This is a one-year snapshot of 2021.**

This does not include active cases from previous years where a child was still missing in 2021. This chart also includes recoveries in 2021 of children who were reported missing in previous years. A child that was reported missing on Dec. 31, 2021, would still be listed as active on this chart.

Federal legislation enacted in 2014 requires state agencies to report a missing child to both law enforcement and NCMEC within 24 hours of receiving information about a missing child under their care.

There are many reasons why children run away, especially from social services care. These can include running to a non-custodial family member, running from a placement where they're not happy, or being lured away by gangs or traffickers.

These children face many risks. In fact, 19% of the children who ran from the care of social services and were reported missing to NCMEC in 2021, were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

For more information [click here](#).

In 2021, NCMEC assisted with **21,051** cases of children missing from care.

One of the first ways many people are introduced to NCMEC is through the AMBER Alert program. AMBER Alerts are activated by law enforcement in the most serious child-abduction cases.

We've been tasked by the U.S. Department of Justice to handle the secondary distribution of these alerts, which includes cell phones, social media, billboards and more.

Check out more about the AMBER Alert program and get answers to frequently asked questions [here](#).

**1,111** children have been successfully recovered as a direct result of the AMBER Alert program as of Dec. 31, 2021.

When a child has been missing for more than two years, a photograph may no longer show what that child looks like present day. NCMEC's specialized artists working on the forensic imaging team create age-progression images of children as they mature so the public has a more accurate representation of what that child may look like now.

In 2021, NCMEC's forensic artists age-progressed **257** long-term missing children; and more than **7,500** since the team began this work in 1989.

When the remains of a child are found with little to no clues as to their identity, it can be very challenging for law enforcement to ever determine who that child was or who was responsible for their death. But advancements in DNA and genealogy are revolutionizing the search for answers and finally giving names back to unidentified child victims. NCMEC partners with labs and genealogists to help law enforcement trace a child's DNA to relatives who may have uploaded their own sample to popular online DNA databases.

**In 2021, NCMEC assisted with 21 cases solved through the use of genealogy.**

Named in honor of Adam Walsh, Team Adam provides rapid, onsite assistance to law enforcement and families during critical cases involving missing children. They are retired law enforcement professionals with years of experience at the federal, state and local levels.

**In 2021, Team Adam deployed to the scene of 34 cases of critically missing children and did virtual consultations on an additional 52 critical cases. They have deployed more than 1,200 times since Team Adam began in 2003.**

Team Adam consultants also assist law enforcement with long-term missing cases, bringing knowledge of landfill assessments, search and rescue, biometrics collection and the integration of all other available NCMEC resources.

As a private, non-profit organization NCMEC has a unique ability to engage in public-private partnerships to achieve our mission. Through the in-kind donation of data, technology, and other tools, specialized analysts develop information and leads to support the recovery of missing children.

**In 2021, NCMEC responded to 3,973 requests for information to support the recovery of missing children.**

In order to better inform law enforcement, the public and our safety materials, NCMEC tracks and analyzes attempted child abductions and related incidents. Analyzing these crimes enables us to teach families how to better protect their children and provide law enforcement with tools that can help guard their communities. For more information about how these crimes are happening, [click here](#).

**In 2021, NCMEC tracked 395 attempted abductions involving 499 children, with a total of 14,902 incidents involving 18,867 children since we began tracking in 2005.**

NCMEC plays a vital role in the fight to reduce child sexual exploitation. We've reviewed millions of images of child sexual abuse in an effort to find the child and help law enforcement remove them from abusive situations. Every day, we work to disrupt the trading of child sexual abuse images and videos online and identify missing children who are being exploited through sex trafficking online in efforts to help survivors begin to rebuild their lives.

NCMEC operates the CyberTipline, a national mechanism for the public and electronic service providers to report instances of suspected child sexual exploitation. Since its inception in 1998, the CyberTipline has received more than 16 million reports.

In 2021, the CyberTipline received 29,397,681 million reports, up from 21.7 million reports in 2020.

240,598 of those reports from 2021 were from the public and 29,157,083 were from electronic service providers. For a full chart of the number of reports from ESPs in 2021, click [here](#).

When NCMEC receives a report of CSAM online, we notify the hosting provider. For a full chart of notices sent to ESPs in 2021, click [here](#).

We continue to see CSAM evolving, often becoming more and more egregious. Offenders are using video more than ever before, which

documents their crime more completely, including the addition of audio.

Reports of videos increased more than 40% from 2020.

Crimes on the internet are not limited to national borders. CSAM produced in one country can be downloaded in countries across the globe instantly. Reports to NCMECs CyberTipline can be traced to nearly every country in the world.

In 2021, **93.5%** of our reports resolved to locations outside of the U.S.

When law enforcement seizes child sexual abuse material in an investigation, they need to quickly figure out the identity of the children in the images and videos and determine if they are safe, or their abuse is ongoing.

NCMECs Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP) serves as the nations clearinghouse on identified child victims of CSAM. Files containing unidentified children are reviewed and analyzed for any information as to their potential location or who is responsible for their abuse. When this information can be determined, CVIP provides the analysis to the appropriate law enforcement, both domestic and international.

In addition, NCMEC's CVIP connects police who are investigating the collection of CSAM with the police who originally identified the child victim(s) depicted in the files so they can provide additional information to assist prosecution of CSAM collectors.

NCMEC also helps track the distribution of files of identified children. Many of these child victims, now adults, may choose to share their voices through victim impact statements at sentencing. Or they may want to receive notification from federal or state prosecutions of individuals who possessed or distributed images or videos of their abuse. These victims are eligible for restitution to cover medical expenses, therapy costs, lost wages and more. While NCMEC does not notify victims, we are a critical step in the process, alerting the agencies to the presence of a victim in a case and working with victims and their lawyers on the restitution process.

Since the program inception in 2002, CVIP has reviewed more than 350 million images and videos.

**In 2021, NCMEC received 4,877 requests from law enforcement, containing more than 35 million images and videos. Analysts help determine if the children depicted have been previously identified or if they are unknown or new victims.**

#### Actively traded images and videos

NCMEC's Child Victim Identification Program serves as the U.S. clearinghouse for information on CSAM and has enrolled 20,600 identified children in the program.

**Of those, 2,260 children are depicted in imagery considered actively traded, meaning the images or videos have been seen in multiple reports to NCMEC.**

#### Relationship of offender to child in actively traded images and videos

Gender

**Male**

**36%**

**Female**

**64%**

Age

**Infant/Toddler**

**8%**

**Prepubescent**

**59%**

**Pubescent**

**33%**

Due to the permanency of the imagery, CSAM can cause continual victimization to survivors, even decades after the sexual abuse ends. That's why NCMEC works to help CSAM survivors and their families by connecting them with mental health and legal professionals as well as peer support networks to assist in their recovery. In addition, NCMEC facilitates the sending of alerts to tech companies who are inadvertently hosting CSAM on their platforms.

In 2021, NCMECs CyberTipline received more than 10 times the number of reports of CSAM than we did a decade ago. To manage that incredible amount of data, NCMEC works with ESPs so they can voluntarily scan their systems to identify, report and remove files with matching hashes.

In 2021, NCMEC added **1,487,992** hashes for verified CSAM to its hash-sharing list, with a total of **5,173,165** hashes.

Child sex trafficking is a crime that is happening everywhere. NCMEC has received reports from all 50 U.S. states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico and in every type of community: suburban, rural, urban and tribal lands. There's no one version of what child sex trafficking looks like. We've seen children victimized while living at home, trafficked by a pimp or even family members. Children who have run away are disproportionately targeted by traffickers and buyers, who prey upon vulnerabilities and a child's need for basic

resources like food and a place to live.

Of the more than **25,000** cases of children reported missing to NCMEC in 2021 who had run away, **1 in 6** were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

Of the children reported to NCMEC who ran away and were likely victims of child sex trafficking:

NCMEC receives reports of suspected child sex trafficking to our hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST, our CyberTipline, as well as from law enforcement. In 2021, NCMEC's Child Sex Trafficking Team provided analytical support to law enforcement in more than 17,200 reports regarding possible child sex trafficking.

Survivors of child sex trafficking have experienced significant trauma. That's why NCMEC works to support child welfare professionals in preparing for the recovery of their missing child. Ensuring survivors of child sex trafficking receive trauma-informed response and specialized services immediately upon recovery is crucial to their support and healing.

Recovery planning recognizes that when a child is recovered from trafficking, it's an unparalleled opportunity to begin to break the cycle of exploitation. Informed and specialized engagement at the time of and following recovery, has the potential to discredit the lies and manipulation of a trafficker and start to build the foundation of healthy, caring relationships.

In 2021, NCMEC's recovery services team provided recovery planning and safety planning for **733** children who were likely victims of child sex trafficking.

NCMEC's Sex Offender Tracking Team assists law enforcement in their efforts to locate noncompliant sex offenders. The team also works to link information about noncompliant sex offenders to unresolved cases of missing and sexually exploited children known to NCMEC.

In 2021, NCMEC assisted with more than **22,170** requests to help locate noncompliant sex offenders. Of those, feedback indicates that **4,037** noncompliant sex offenders were subsequently located/arrested.

NCMEC's mission of child protection also includes our work to prevent further victimization. These efforts go beyond our initial response to help secure the immediate safety of a missing or exploited child and include our educational programs that empower children and families to help them make safer decisions on- and offline. They also include our efforts to provide mental health support to families who have experienced a missing or exploited child to help them on the path to healing and reconnecting with each other and their community.

NCMEC provides a wide range of support services for victims and their families. Our masters-level trained advocates speak with thousands of individuals every year, offering valuable resources and assistance to help them through one of the toughest times in their lives.

These advocates also help with reunification after a child is recovered, preparing for the needs of the child and in some cases, offering travel assistance to get them home safe.

We responded to **2,249** requests for mental health assistance and crisis support.

In 2021, our volunteer peer-support group, [\*\*Team HOPE\*\*](#), expanded to provide emotional peer support to not only parents and family members of missing and exploited children but also to adults who were missing and/or exploited as children. Team HOPE provides a community of support so no one has to go through this challenging experience alone.

In 2021, Team HOPE supported **5,127** individuals and more than **90,000** since it began in 1998.

To further help individuals in need, NCMEC facilitates the [\*\*Family Advocacy Outreach Network \(FAON\)\*\*](#). This is a membership-based network of experienced mental health treatment professionals and organizations who are willing to provide therapeutic services pro bono or at a low fee.

NCMEC is unique in that we receive millions of reports each year about missing and exploited children through our hotline, 1-800-THE-LOST, and our CyberTipline. This data allows NCMEC to identify trends first-hand and create education resources to address the evolving needs of children both online and in the real world. All our resources are free, age-appropriate and designed for many audiences, including children, parents and child-serving professionals.

Our prevention resources have been viewed in all **50 states** and more than **180 countries**.

In 2021, our online safety program, NetSmartz, has reached **more than 3.8 million students**.

In 2021, **more than 22,000 children were reached with child abuse prevention programs through NCMEC's partnership with [\*\*Prevent Child Abuse Vermont\*\*](#).**

We also know that when a child goes missing or is sexually exploited, a law enforcement agency that is trained in these issues will be better prepared and will hopefully see a better outcome. NCMEC has trained law enforcement and other professionals who work in all 50 states and 33 countries.

NCMEC has trained more than **393,000 law enforcement**, criminal/juvenile justice and healthcare professionals.

We know it takes everyone working together to keep kids safe. That's why we launched our new online training platform, NCMEC CONNECT. This platform is your virtual gateway to on-demand trainings, virtual discussions and resources about online child safety, prevention and how you can better protect the children in your community.

NCMEC CONNECT has over **20,000** users.

In 2021, total social media followers for NCMEC (@MissingKids) had grown to 1.8 million across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok.

The average monthly reach was over **8 million** people.

Missingkids.org had **8.6 million** visitors in 2021.

We want to thank the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, our corporate partners, individual donors and everyone who has contributed resources and funds to support NCMEC's mission to find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation and prevent victimization. We couldn't do our vital work without all of you.

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This Web site is funded, in part, through a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Neither the U.S. Department of Justice nor any of its components operate, control, are responsible for, or necessarily endorse, this Web site (including, without limitation, its content, technical infrastructure, and policies, and any services or tools provided).

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