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NCMEC ignores its own research and lies about “stranger danger”

NARSOL rebuts NCMEC's false claims opposing ALI recommendations

Raleigh, North Carolina | October 18, 2021 -- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children ([NCMEC](#)) was co-founded by John and Reve Walsh and is funded by the U.S. Dep't of Justice. Along with the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws ([NARSOL](#)) and the American Law Institute ([ALI](#)), NCMEC seeks to protect our nation's children and improve the safety of our society as a whole.

NCMEC recently issued a press release attacking ALI's recommendations that sexual offense registries be taken out of online accessibility and be, as they were originally intended, in only the domain of law enforcement. This position is more in keeping with what [research, experts in the field, and clinicians](#) support as best practice in the treatment, management, and prevention of sexual offending.

In doing so, NCMEC has deliberately used misinformation that is uniformly disputed by research, experts in the field, and its very own literature. [NCMEC's release claims](#), “If adopted by states, portions of the Revised Code raise significant child safety concerns. Children will be endangered by the Revised Code's limitations on prosecuting sex trafficking and its removal of most protections provided by sex offender registries.”

For removal of the sexual offense registry from online notification to put children at risk and endanger them, especially in regard to sex trafficking, it must be true that online registries help protect children from sexual crime and risk of being trafficked.

They don't.

[NCMEC's publication dated May 7, 2020](#) even states why:

“Before NCMEC was co-founded in 1984, it was often believed that strangers abducted most missing children. However, over the last 36 years, NCMEC has collected data from hundreds of thousands of cases, and we now know that the overwhelming majority of missing children reported are endangered runaways. The statistics tell us that last year, 91 percent of missing kids reported to NCMEC were children running away from home or foster care. The second highest rates of missing children were abducted by a family member who did not have custody. Less than one percent were nonfamily (stranger) abductions.”

And in regard to child trafficking, the same publication informs that children are sometimes trafficked by their own family members and that “In 2019, of the 26,300 endangered runaways reported to NCMEC, one in six were likely victims of child sex trafficking.”

Less than one percent were stranger abductions. Unless one assumes that 100 percent of those strangers were repeat offenders who are already on a sex offense registry, that means that less – and evidence confirms significantly less – than one percent of child abductions were committed by persons for whom a public sexual offense registry might – ***might*** – be useful.

Additionally, NCMEC claims that ALI's recommendations will remove from persons hiring those who work with youth in any capacity the ability to determine if the person has a previous sexual crime

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conviction. In analyzing this argument, Don Thurber, a NARSOL state leader and advocate, said that reasoning is flawed because “. . . all the organizations that are running these checks on potential volunteers or employees are also running criminal background checks, and everything significant they can learn from the registry is also contained in the background checks, making the registry redundant for their purposes.”

NCMEC’s final misuse of information concerns the recidivism of those who have a sexual crime conviction. Using a respected DOJ report, they then speculate about unreported crimes to justify their implication that these recidivism rates are high. They are not. [Every reputable study](#) done for many years yields consistently low actual reoffense numbers for those on registries. According to Barb Wright, attorney and NARSOL advocate, the way the numbers are presented in this NCMEC release, “. . . is not only misleading, it is inaccurate. It includes actual results (the DOJ report 1997 release) with estimates.”

Background

The American Law Institute (ALI), a nonprofit organization composed of judges, lawyers, and professors, provides recommendations to clarify and update the common law. Their Model Penal Code (MPC) is designed to guide state legislatures on updating and standardizing state criminal laws. Revisions are presented as legal recommendations to legislators. They recently passed revisions titled “Penal Code: Sexual Assault and Related Offenses.”

Conclusion

NCMEC’s: “The Revised Code creates grave risks to children by prohibiting youth-serving organizations from accessing sex offender registries. This access is essential to conduct background checks for applicants interacting with children. If organizations cannot vet applicants for sexual crimes, children will be endangered, parents will avoid enrolling their children in programs, and child-serving organizations may close rather than provide unsafe environments for children.”

The truth: The Revised Code falls closer in line to the position taken by years of research and, if implemented, will go a long way toward improving public safety and freeing up resources to address child sexual abuse, something the registry doesn’t do. No children will be at risk due to organizations not accessing registries; such access is **not** essential; background checks will reveal the same information. NCMEC’s practice of denying facts, even those they openly profess, is not the path to improved child safety. NARSOL condemns their tactics used against ALI and calls on them to adhere to the evidence as it is reflected in ALI’s revised penal code.

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