

Attorney General Pam Bondi News Release

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Media Contact: Jenn Meale
Phone: (850) 245-0150

Attorney General Pam Bondi Launches “From Instant Message to Instant Nightmare” Initiative to Help Parents Protect Children from Sex Trafficking

TAMPA, Fla.—Flanked by law enforcement officers, Attorney General Pam Bondi today unveiled her statewide initiative intended to raise awareness about human trafficking and to help parents protect their children from online sex traffickers. The initiative, “From Instant Message to Instant Nightmare,” debuts on billboards, bus shelters, and mall displays throughout Florida. Parents and adults are directed to MyFloridaLegal.com to download a parental tip sheet about online safety and a pledge for children to sign and print. The pledge can be taped to people’s home computers to serve as a reminder of safe Internet use. Victims of human trafficking include children, women and men who are subjected to sexual exploitation or forced labor through force, fraud or coercion.

“By raising awareness about human trafficking and asking parents to play an active role in preventing sex traffickers from recruiting their children online, we can help stop this horrific crime,” stated Attorney General Pam Bondi. “According to one report, the average age of children recruited into sex trafficking is between 12 and 14 years old.”

According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, there are 27 million people enslaved worldwide. Sadly, this horrific crime is happening right here in Florida. In 2011, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center ranked Florida third in the number of calls received by the center’s human trafficking hotline. Attorney

General Pam Bondi is dedicated to making Florida a zero-tolerance state for human trafficking.

Parents can follow these tips to help protect their children from human traffickers online:

- Talk to your children about sex trafficking and sexual abuse. Describe human trafficking as modern-day slavery, where people are captured and treated inhumanely. Awareness is the first step in preventing it;
- Restrict use of the computer to the living room or other area of the house where other family members are present;
- Know your child's screen names and passwords, even if you have your child write them down and put them in a sealed envelope. If anything happens, you will be able to access your child's accounts to trace who he or she has been communicating with;
- Use the parental control settings on your computer to check the Internet history. Look for warning signs in your children, such as: mood swings and anxiety; new friends who are significantly older; and new gifts, pre-paid credit cards, clothes or cell phones that you did not purchase; and
- Let your children know that they can talk to you, or a trusted adult, about anything that makes them uncomfortable.

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