



Highlights of [GAO-03-272](#), a report to the Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The trafficking of child pornography through increasingly sophisticated electronic media, including Internet chat rooms, newsgroups, and peer-to-peer networks, has made such images more readily accessible. These technological advances have created more challenges for law enforcement, including requiring effective coordination to combat this crime. The federal law enforcement agencies that play a role in investigating child pornography are the FBI, Customs, Postal Inspection Service, and Secret Service.

This report provides information on the coordination of federal efforts to combat child pornography. Specifically, it (1) identifies mechanisms federal agencies have in place to combat child pornography and (2) provides information on an opportunity to further enhance coordination among federal law enforcement agencies.

What GAO Recommends

To further enhance coordination of key law enforcement agencies' efforts to combat child pornography, GAO recommends that the Attorney General include the Postal Inspection Service and Secret Service, as well as the FBI and Customs as agencies designated to receive direct access to child pornography tips reported to NCMEC by remote computing or electronic communication service providers.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-272.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Laurie Ekstrand on (202) 512-8777 or ekstrandL@gao.gov.

COMBATING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Federal Agencies Coordinate Law Enforcement Efforts, but an Opportunity Exists for Further Enhancement

What GAO Found

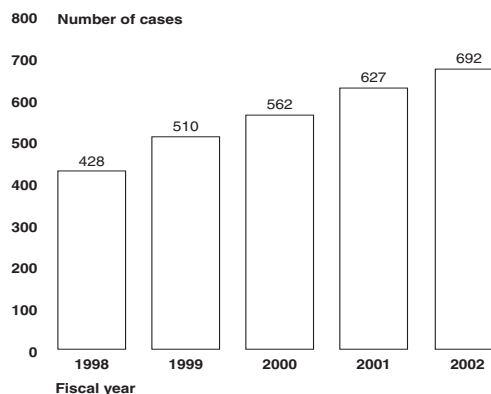
Federal agencies responsible for combating child pornography have various coordination mechanisms in place for combating this crime. These coordinated efforts have contributed to increases in the number of federal child pornography cases prosecuted over the past 5 years. Federal coordination mechanisms to combat child pornography include

- monthly meetings of officials from key federal law enforcement agencies,
- Justice attorneys' efforts to coordinate and consolidate prosecution of cases,
- multiple federal task forces to coordinate services and investigative activities,
- national program for sharing images of exploited children among law enforcement agencies, and
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) provides child pornography tips to designated law enforcement agencies.

Although law enforcement officials and leading communication service providers generally view current coordination mechanisms as effective, an opportunity exists to further enhance information sharing. Remote computing and electronic communication service providers are mandated under the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998 to report all instances of child pornography to NCMEC. Currently, FBI and Customs have direct access to these child pornography-related tips reported to NCMEC by communication service providers. Despite their role in combating child pornography, the Postal Inspection Service and the Secret Service lack direct access to these reports.

Representatives from the Customs Service, Postal Inspection Service, and Secret Service reviewed a draft of this report and concurred with the information presented in the report. However, Justice in its official comments believed that GAO's recommendation for more tip sharing was unnecessary, but agreed to continue to study the issue.

Federal Child Pornography Cases Prosecuted by Fiscal Year



Source: Department of Justice.