

# NEWS RELEASE

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For  
Children's Cove  
*The Cape & Islands Child Advocacy Center*



## Children's Cove Warns of Local Surge in Online Exploitation

**Cape Cod, MA** – Children's Cove, The Cape & Islands Child Advocacy Center, is calling on parents and caregivers to be extra diligent in the prevention of online exploitation of children as they attend school remotely and spend more time online. The level of risk has dramatically increased with predators also moving online and having more hidden and direct access to children. Since July 1, Children's Cove has more than doubled its total referrals from the previous year. If this trend continues, there will be a 120 percent increase in local sexual exploitation referrals, as seen elsewhere across the state and country.

[Research](#) has shown that 1 in 5 children will experience unwanted sexual content/solicitation online. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) defines [Online Enticement](#) as “an individual communicating with someone believed to be a child via the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offense or abduction. This is a broad category of online exploitation and includes sextortion, in which a child is being groomed to take sexually explicit images and/or ultimately meet face-to-face with someone for sexual purposes, or to engage in a sexual conversation online or, in some instances, to sell/trade the child's sexual images.”

Children's Cove works in partnership with local law enforcement, the Department of Children and Families, and the District Attorney's Office for the comprehensive and coordinated response to cases of online and commercial sexual exploitation of children on the Cape and Islands. “Combating online exploitation has been a challenge for many of us in the field for years now,” said Stacy Gallagher, Director of Children's Cove. “But it's the new normal. It requires parents and caregivers to be involved in what, to many, is the private online world of their children. Even those places that parents think are safe spaces online, such as video games or sites designed for children, have flaws and can give access to online predators.”

Children's Cove officials stress that conversations about body safety and online safety may seem uncomfortable and overwhelming at first but can be critical in reducing risk. They also recommend that parents and caregivers take free [courses](#) offered by National Online Safety to learn about systems their children are using and how to keep them safe. For more information and other general online safety tips, please visit the [Children's Cove website](#).

### About Children's Cove:

*Children's Cove, a department of Barnstable County, has been the Cape and Islands Child Advocacy Center since 1997. Children's Cove provides coordinated and comprehensive multidisciplinary services to child victims of sexual abuse,*

*physical abuse, witness to domestic violence and child sexual exploitation and trafficking. To learn more visit [www.ChildrensCove.org](http://www.ChildrensCove.org)*

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