

Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) & Digital Respons-Ability LLC

Overview:

On July 1, 2019, the Utah Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force was granted \$1.76 million by the State of Utah (Contract #206030) to promote primary prevention programming regarding internet/online safety for children and minors. The appropriation was intended to continue through June 30, 2024. However, the Utah State Legislature suspended the contract due to a reduction in available funds, rescinding the funds in their entirety on October 5, 2020.

With the initial funding granted by the Utah State Legislature, ICAC contracted with Digital Respons-Ability LLC for the purpose of educating both parents and children about internet safety *before* child exploitation occurs. Despite the challenges posed by an interruption in funding and complications surrounding COVID-19, Digital Respons-Ability LLC demonstrated a promising approach to fulfill these goals through the implementation of research-based community engagement strategies.

This document:

- i) Outlines ICAC's mission statement;
- ii) States ICAC's initial goals in seeking a partnership with Digital Respons-Ability LLC; and
- iii) Determines Digital Respons-Ability LLC performance to be in alignment with ICAC primary goals.

As a result of the the satisfactory performance demonstrated by Digital Respons-Ability LLC, ICAC supports continuing this collaborative partnership to further carry out its principal purpose to protect children from online exploitation in the state of Utah.

i) Utah Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Mission Statement:

The Utah Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force was established in 2000 for the purpose of protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation by offenders who utilize the internet to victimize them.

The Utah ICAC Task Force is one of 61 nationally recognized ICAC Task Forces— involving 37 different affiliates of local, state, and federal agencies. When initially established, ICAC consisted of 2 employees and now employs 98 officers across the state of Utah.

ICAC's mission is to **protect** children from sexual abuse and exploitation through online platforms, participating in *proactive* and *reactive* approaches through **prosecution**, and most importantly, **prevention**.

The Utah ICAC Task Force:

- **Protects** and **Prevents** children from online sexual enticements:
 - *Proactive approach*: Agents having an online presence to find predators seeking to sexually exploit or abuse children.
 - *Reactive approach*: NCMEC (Cybertips), tipline, parents, other law enforcement agencies and community.
- **Prosecutes** sexual exploitation crimes involving minors (typically crimes committed are against minors/children that are pre-pubescent -- toddlers and infants that are generally 13 years of age and younger), such as:
 - Child pornography:
 - *Manufacturing*: Producing child pornography pictures and videos
 - *Distribution*: Sending/selling child pornography
 - *Possession*: Having child pornography in their possession (i.e., on phones and/or computers)

- ***Prevents*** incidents from occurring through community presentations. The target audiences for public awareness presentations are school administrations, church groups, community programs, college classrooms, businesses, etc. In these presentations, we engage with the community to:
 - o Educate about ways to maintain safety on the Internet
 - o Generate awareness on how the Internet and other web-based programs are being used to solicit children into dangerous situations that put themselves (and often their family's) privacy at risk.
 - o Educate about practical ways to maintain privacy when online, including how to switch their social networking profile settings to private.
 - o Educate about exploitative digital trends, such as “sexting,” which is the act of receiving and sending inappropriate information through the Internet by email, phones or social networking sites
 - o Educate about cyberbullying and why it poses a great danger than the “school yard bully” of the past.
 - o Educate on ways the community can assist ICAC and protect their families by using password protecting wireless routers.
 - o Encourage open communication and dialog with family members about Internet safety at home, school, and in public settings.

Because ICAC members understand that arrests alone cannot resolve the problem of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation, the ICAC program is dedicated to preventative strategies through educating parents and youth about the potential dangers of online activity. As child exploitation continues to be a growing issue across the state, ICAC faces challenges related to understaffing. To engage in preventative efforts most effectively, ICAC sought the support of Digital Respons-Ability LLC.

ii) **Collaborative Partnership with Digital Respons-Ability LLC:**

To fulfill one of ICAC’s primary goals of ***prevention***, ICAC procured through the State Request for Proposal (RFP) process a partnership with Digital Respons-Ability LLC. More specifically, the Digital Respons-Ability LLC was contracted to create and implement community-based educational programming for children and adults to increase knowledge of technology-facilitated exploitation and provide strategies for preventing further exploitation.

The efforts carried out by Digital Respons-Ability LLC were intended to:

1. *Increase awareness of technology-facilitated exploitation.*
2. *Increase awareness of online behaviors and the risks associated with said behaviors.*
3. *Increase knowledge of preventative measures to reduce risks while engaging in online activities and using communication devices.*
4. *Positively influence community attitudes about online safety and the prevention of child exploitation.*

After reviewing Digital Respons-Ability LLC’s efforts to fulfill these goals, ICAC determines the organization to provide valuable contributions to ICAC’s mission to prevent instances of child exploitation through preventative and educational means.

iii) **Review of Digital Respons-Ability LLC’s Contributions to ICAC goals:**

Digital Respons-Ability LLC implements best practices through data-driven research. Although efforts were interrupted due to suspension of funding and COVID-19, Digital Respons-Ability LLC’s contributions demonstrate promising strategies to reach the goals stated above.

Further, the goals listed above are assessed here to demonstrate Digital Respons-Ability LLC’s current success and future potential in meeting the project deliverables.

1. *Increase awareness of technology-facilitated exploitation.*

From July 2019 to July 2020, Digital Respons-Ability LLC participated in a total of **117 community outreach events**, reaching **2,486 attendees** (1,085 parents, 673 students, and 728 administrators/community leaders).

Community outreach events carried out by Digital Respons-Ability LLC staff consist of the following, among others:

- Legislative and community organization meetings:
 - State of Utah Senators
 - District Attorney's and Public Information Officers (PIO)
 - Department of Public Safety
 - Salt Lake County Health Department
 - International Rescue Committee
- School faculty/educator trainings:
 - Utah State Board of Education
 - Davis Educational Foundation
 - Utah Afterschool Network
 - United Way of Utah County
 - SLCo School District School Counselor Training
 - Vernal School Community Council Training
 - South Salt Lake Community Council Training
 - Antelope Elementary school administration (Clearfield, UT)
 - Olympus High school (Holladay, UT)
 - Sand Springs Elementary (Layton, UT)
 - Ethenos Academy (Kearns, UT)
- Religious group meetings:
 - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saint Relief Societies
- Community organizations supporting vulnerable populations:
 - Women's United, United Way
 - Comunidades Unidas
 - Tabitha's Way Food Pantry
- Women's book clubs:
 - Lindon Book Club

2. *Increase awareness of online behaviors and the risks associated with said behaviors.*

From September 2019 to April 2020, Digital Respons-Ability LLC gave over **356 presentations** across **109 schools** (grades K-12) in the state of Utah, reaching **12,160 individuals** (11,646 students, and 464 parents).

In addition to increasing awareness to Utah's schools, Digital Respons-Ability LLC increased awareness of online behaviors and risks through:

- Media outreach (radio broadcasting segments, blog posts, etc.):
 - KRCL radio
 - KSL radio
 - Larazamedia radio
 - Common Sense media
 - Utah Afterschool Network blog post

- United Way Help Me Grow blog post
- Informational fliers (community and school resource fairs):
 - Utah State PTA Advocacy Conference
- Presentations (summits and conferences):
 - Healthy Teens Coalition Summit
 - STEM Girls Fair
 - Critical Issues Conference
 - Utah Coalition for Educational Technology Conference

3. *Increase knowledge of preventative measures to reduce risks while engaging in online activities and using communication devices.*

From July 2019 to July 2020, Digital Respons-Ability LLC used the platforms listed above to educate parents, school counselors, students, teachers, and community leaders about topics, including:

- Digital privacy
- Digital sexual violence
- Digital inclusion
- Digital authoritarianism
- Digital responsibility
- Digital citizenship
- Cyberbullying

4. *Positively influence community attitudes about online safety and the prevention of child exploitation.*

Throughout their efforts in 2019-2020, Digital Respons-Ability LLC actively built upon previously established, research-based approaches to maintain best practices. This was done through meeting with organizations to continuously adopt best practices and employ effective outreach strategies through research organizations such as:

- The Society for Prevention Research
- ILEAD
- Cyberbullying Institute Research Center
- Local university professors

Summary:

As detailed above, Digital Respons-Ability LLC has shown to provide valuable services for the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, and most importantly, the State of Utah. Because Digital Respons-Ability LLC adopts research-based best practices to effectively engage with the community about these critical topics through preventative and educational efforts, ICAC supports the collaborative partnership with Digital Respons-Ability LLC to further protect children in Utah from internet exploitation.