Defining a hotline

Before deciding whether it will be feasible and possible to set up an Internet hotline, it is crucial to understand what an 'hotline' is, and what it is not. Potential hotline operators should not be confused by the terminology, and should focus on the function and objectives of Internet hotlines in operation around the world today.

Internet 'hotline' is the English language term used to describe what is in reality a diverse range of organisations and frameworks that offer a common service with a shared objective: an online reporting mechanism for the public to make reports of suspected illegal content and activities found on the Internet, enabling swift action to be taken by the relevant hosting company to remove this content from public access and refer it to the relevant authorities for appropriate action.

Because of this, a 'hotline' could in fact refer to:

1. The organisation that runs the reporting mechanism (i.e. the hotline organisation)

2. The reporting mechanism itself (i.e. the service offered by an organisation).

Naturally, the term 'hotline' is not commonly used in other languages. For example, in Spanish the term 'Linea de Denuncia' or 'Canal de Denuncia' might be used, and in French a 'Ligne de Signalement'. In this sense, it is not the name but the function of this service this is important.

A hotline accepts reports from Internet users in their country about images and videos that they suspect are illegal and to show the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. These reports are mostly in the form of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs).

Best practice is for the hotline to offer an anonymous reporting service.

Internet hotlines are an expert processing channel for suspected illegal digital content. Overall, their staff combine legal, technical, and thematic expertise that is both international, because of the nature of the issue, and local due to the supremacy of national legislation and the specificities of the local infrastructure.

For the purposes of this guide, an internet hotline is a web-based reporting mechanism linked to a structured framework to respond to reports of suspected child sexual abuse material found on the Internet.

When embarking upon a project to establish a hotline, it is therefore essential to have a clear idea of what a hotline is and what it can do. This will help to answer some important questions:

1. Which organisation from which sector will run the hotline service?

2. What will the structure of this hotline service look like and how will it operate within the local environment of the country?

To ensure scalability and sustainability, it is strongly advisable to focus on the creation of a hotline as a service integrated into the operations of an existing organisation, whether it be a civil society organisation, an industry-led initiative, or a government agency.

Indeed, internet hotlines in operation today exist in many shapes and sizes and are operated by organisations from different sectors. See the INHOPE membership page (http://inhope.org/gns/our-members.aspx) for links to INHOPE members around the world. More information can be found below(http://hotlinedevelopmentguide.org/guide/defining-a-hotline/#section-1785).

Profiles of the hotlines in the INHOPE network can also be found in the report *Global Research Project: A Global Landscape of Hotlines Combating Child Sexual Abuse Material on the Internet and an Assessment of Shared Challenges,* produced by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children(http://www.missingkids.org/cybertipline) in 2015 – Global Research Project (http://hotlinedevelopmentguide.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Global-Research-Project_NCMEC-2015.pdf).

When considering the establishment of an Internet hotline, it is advisable to start small and be realistic about the needs in the respective country and the capacity of the hotline organisation at the early stages.

A hotline reporting service can be introduced as part of the wider set of activities or services conducted by an organisation. This enables the new service to benefit from the transferable expertise of its host organisation, whether in ICT, child protection or other, and to operate at a scale that allows it to develop the knowledge and expertise needed for effective report management.

Whatever the case, the organisation that operates the hotline may already be or should aspire to be a:

- National focal point for the reception, triage, analysis and onward referral of reports to the relevant Electronic Service Provider, competent national authorities and/or the hotline in the country of hosting of the illegal content
- Expert advice and information point for the public and Industry partners on the topic of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and often online child safety more generally
- Expert point of contact for the global network of INHOPE Member Hotlines

Hotline models

There is no single model for an Internet hotline. Each Internet hotline has been established according to the context and specific circumstances in the country, which means that the optimal choice for a country depends on the local context. However, it is important that the selection of organisation that will operate the hotline is made of the basis of an objective analysis, and that all stakeholders agree and support the organisation.

Most (about 70%) of the organisations operating hotlines within the INHOPE network identify themselves as non-profit organisations, followed by those within the governmental sector, private sector, academia, or other.

In 2016, the global network of INHOPE consists of 51 Hotlines in 45 countries worldwide. Below are just a few examples of hotlines operated by organisations in the different sectors:

Governmental Sector

- Australia – Office of the Children's E-Safety Commissioner(https://www.esafety.gov.au/) – hotline(https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting)

Regulatory authorities
- Lithuania – Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania (http://www.rrt.lt/en/about_rrt.html) – hotline(http://www.draugiskasinternetas.lt/en/main/report)
- South Korea – Korea Communications Standards Commission (https://www.kocsc.or.kr/eng/Message.php) – hotline (https://www.kocsc.or.kr/eng/report01.php)

Industry-based and industry-membership hotlines

- Germany – eco, the Association of the Internet Industry(https://international.eco.de/) – hotline (https://international.eco.de/internet-complaints-office.html)
- Ireland – Internet Service Providers' Association of Ireland(http://www.ispai.ie/) / hotline (http://www.hotline.ie/)

Civil society

- Finland – Save the Children Finland(https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/en/frontpage/) – hotline (https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/en/our-work-in-finland/children-and-digital-media/finnish-hotline-nettivihje/report-illegal-content/)
- Netherlands – EOKM(http://www.eokm.nl/) – hotline(https://www.meldpunt-kinderporno.nl/)
- Colombia – Red PaPaz(http://www.redpapaz.org/)/ Te Protejo hotline (http://www.teprotejo.org/)
- Japan – Safer Internet Association(http://www.saferinternet.or.jp/english/) – hotline (https://www.internethotline.jp/)

Academia

- Bulgaria – Fund for Applied Research and Communications of Bulgaria (http://www.arcfund.net/) – hotline(http://www.safenet.bg/en/report-illegal-content)
- Poland – NASK (Research and Academic Computer Network) research institute (https://www.nask.pl/nask_en/) – hotline(Dyzurnet.pl)

Hotlines as public private partnerships

By their very nature as outlined throughout this guide, internet hotlines represent close cooperation between the public and the private sector. In some cases, that cooperation is part of daily operations, while in other cases, it is also reflected in the makeup of the hotline organisation.

A leading example is the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (http://www.missingkids.org/ncmec) (NCMEC) in the United States, NCMEC is the leading non-profit organisation that works through public and private partnerships on issues related to missing and sexually exploited children.

In addition, many hotlines in European Union Member States represent cross- sector collaboration. For example, in Germany, the German Safer Internet Center(http://www.saferinternet.de/) includes the joint portal of the Internet hotlines of industry-based eco and non-profit online media self-regulatory body FSM(http://www.fsm.de/en), the jugendschutz.net(http://www.jugendschutz.net/) youth protection hotline, the Awareness Center klicksafe (run by LMK and FSM) and the "Nummer gegen Kummer" children and youth telephone hotline.
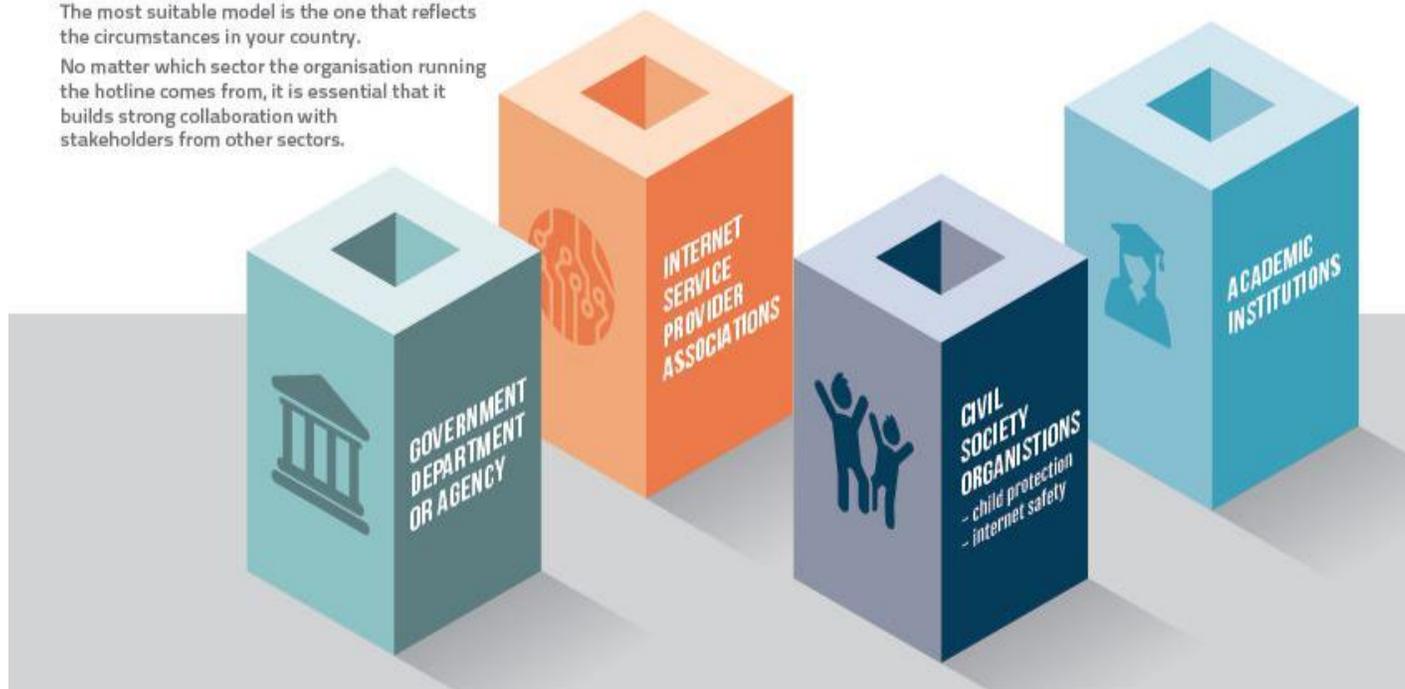
For more information and to read profiles of the hotlines in the INHOPE, download the Global Research Project (http://hotlinedevelopmentguide.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Global-Research-Project_NCMEC-2015.pdf).

Hotlines: A diversity of sectors and models

There is no single model for a hotline, as evidenced by the diversity of the INHOPE network.

The most suitable model is the one that reflects the circumstances in your country.

No matter which sector the organisation running the hotline comes from, it is essential that it builds strong collaboration with stakeholders from other sectors.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER ASSOCIATIONS

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISTIONS
- child protection
- internet safety

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

PDF download: infographic-2016_diversity-of-models-and-sectors (http://hotlinedevelopmentguide.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Infographic-2016_Diversity-of-Models-and-Sectors.pdf)

INHOPE in action

Our Members

National hotlines matter and make a difference every day. National hotlines **empower digital citizens** to come forward. National hotlines **provide public service value**, as they assess reports and the relevance of the tips emanating from the general public on suspected child sexual abuse material. Together, INHOPE and its reporting member hotlines are a force multiplier in global deterrence efforts.

INHOPE member hotlines are tested and vetted for quality assurance. They bring legal expertise and in-depth knowledge of national legal and operational landscapes to the table.

INHOPE member hotlines are **specialised analytical, quality control and deconfliction partners for law enforcement**. They are de facto **alternative reporting channels for a public reluctant to report directly to law enforcement**.

INHOPE member hotlines therefore **serve a triage function**. They **offset the burden on law enforcement**, while **reducing duplication of efforts** and **freeing up valuable time** for investigators to identify victims and perpetrators as well as dismantle criminal networks.

INHOPE member hotlines are **national focal points**. They form a **key component of a wider national strategy to address online child sexual exploitation**.

INHOPE member hotlines **help drive accountability of government**, as they inform public policy discussions, identify intersecting vulnerabilities, pinpoint hotspots and ultimately show where further targeted action is needed.

INHOPE member hotlines **alert industry partners** when their platforms are being misused for criminal activities pertaining to the distribution of CSAM and therefore **help deliver Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the ICT sector**.

Faster, Better, Stronger **Together**

www.inhope.org

What, where, why, how

When developing a hotline, it is essential to understand:

1. The type and nature of the reports the hotline is likely to receive

2. How this relates to the action the hotline will need to take in response to confirmed illegal content.

In general, digital child sexual abuse material circulating online and reported to hotlines would be a combination of:

1. Material (images and videos) that has previously been reported to the hotline and/or law enforcement but continues to circulate online the the same or modified form.

2. Material (images and videos) that does not appear to have been seen before by the hotline and/or law enforcement network

Some of the material may have been produced years earlier, while other material may be have been produced a matter of days or even hours earlier. The victim and perpetrator seen in the images or video may or may not have been identified.

Because of the borderless nature of data exchange and access over the internet, the children seen being abused in the photos and videos processed by a hotline often have no identifiable link to the country where the report is made. In most countries, it is not the role of the hotline but rather the mandate of law enforcement to draw those links based on information supplied to them through multiple channels, including hotlines– see *Victim Identification* below. The overall role of a hotline in this context is to:

- Identify the country where the material is being hosted
- Ensure that all relevant data is referred via hotline and/or law enforcement channels to the country where the material can be removed and/or investigated
- Engage with local ISPs where relevant to have the material removed

Victim Identification in the words of INTERPOL's ~~Crimes against Children Team~~

~~(http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Crimes-against-children/Crimes-against-children)~~

When a person sexually abuses a child and then documents the act for future sexual gratification or for sharing and trading with others, what is being produced is "evidence" of a heinous crime. Law enforcement have an obligation to investigate the crime and rescue the victim. Photographs and films depicting child sexual abuse are not merely online crimes affecting virtual victims; they are documentation or evidence of a real crime involving real people and real suffering.

Victim identification is an investigative methodology that has emerged in recent decades out of a clear need to act upon child sexual abuse material. This material can be found circulating online by the police or hotlines, or seized by the police from computers and other storage devices. Child sexual abuse material is more likely to show the face of the victims of abuse rather than the abuser. This is a reality that dictates the victim-centred focus of image analysis.

The International Child Sexual Exploitation database (ICSE) is a powerful investigative tool made available by INTERPOL to certified, specialised investigators in its global network to access and collaborate on victim identification data.

Hotlines supporting Victim Identification

When a hotline does consider images or videos contained in a report have a likely link to their country, hotline staff can discuss their assessment with their national law enforcement partners.

When law enforcement receive or seize suspected child sexual abuse material, they will act according to their national laws and procedures to determine whether or how an investigation can be initiated. At international level, this could mean bilateral or multilateral data exchange through the ICSE Database with the global network of specialised victim identification law enforcement officers coordinated by INTERPOL.

Since 2015, INHOPE's systems have provided content matching capabilities that identify previously seen images and videos and makes relevant information available to INTERPOL.

Globally, experienced organisations operating a national Internet hotline may cooperative actively with victim identification processes. A leading example of this is the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children(http://www.missingkids.org/home) through its Child Victim Identification Program(http://www.missingkids.org/cvip).

Reports of online child sexual exploitation and abuse other than child sexual abuse material

Use of an Internet hotline to take reports of other forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse will entail the creation of specific response protocols depending on the nature of the issue. Further information can be found in Operations(http://hotlinedevelopmentguide.org/guide/operations/). These can be discussed with the INHOPE Foundation and experienced hotlines during the design phase for a new hotline.

Support for children whose images and videos may be circulating online

This guide is designed to provide support and guidance to set up an Internet hotline for reports of online child sexual abuse material and potentially other forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

However, the increasing volume of user-generated content and the ease of sharing images and videos online means that children and young people are increasingly falling victim to exposure, exploitation and abuse on the Internet.

Whatever the form of the abuse, these children and young people need someone to turn to for anonymous advice. That is why there are child helplines in existence in countries around the world (STATS). For more information on this topic and helplines, please visit Child Helpline International (http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/) or the Better Internet for Kids Portal (https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/practice/helplines).

www.hotlinedevelopmentguide.org