Hotlines in the response ecosystem

The mission of INHOPE is to support the network of hotlines in combatting online CSAM, because internet hotlines play a crucial role in the ecosystem that responds to online CSAM. We believe that hotlines are at the centre of a country's child protection strategy, and we explain this concept in this Chapter.

3.1 The role of the hotline

The WEPROTECT Global Alliance's Model National Response (cited in the previous Chapter) states that hotlines:

- Provide structured and accountable mechanisms at national level to respond to public reports of CSAM and online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Exchange crucial information through the global INHOPE network of hotlines to ensure that confirmed CSAM can be removed from public access.
- Cooperate with local and international partners, support law enforcement, educate, raise awareness, contribute to the development of new technological solutions, and influence the change needed in their countries.

Hotlines are often part of a larger organisation that undertakes other work related to protecting children online in some way, whether that be a helpline,[3] child advocacy institution, industry association, regulatory authority, or other type of organisation. (See *Chapter 3 – Who operates a hotline?* for more information). The hotline operates all aspects of running the hotline itself, taking ownership of removing online CSAM, employing its own analysts who are trained by INHOPE and INTERPOL, and establishing collaboration with national hosting providers and law enforcement agency.

Hotlines enable the public to anonymously report online images and videos that we refer to as 'material,' that they suspect may be illegal. The public are encouraged to report this material by visiting their national hotline website and submitting the URL where the material was found, also known as submitting a report.

Once a hotline analyst has received and confirmed that a report includes CSAM according to its national jurisdiction, they will send a Notice and Takedown order to the relevant hosting provider so that the material is removed from the internet. By working together, hotlines and hosting providers ensure that CSAM is taken down as quickly as possible. If one of these parties does not cooperate, the eco-system breaks down. This is why the early roundtables and outreach to

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[3] For more information on child helplines in your country, please visit Child Helpline International.

LEAs, industry, and other stakeholders in your country are crucial. They could potentially approve or block the establishment of a hotline. See the *Hotline Creation Timeline* for more information.

3.2 The role of law enforcement agencies

The importance of law enforcement agencies in the eco-system is crucial, and the importance of this relationship is evidenced by the fact that the first national entity with whom the applying organisation engages should be the law enforcement agency. This is encouraged by INHOPE as we work with the organisation that wishes to establish a hotline. We insist that all INHOPE hotlines have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with their national law enforcement agency and a close collaborative relationship. Hotlines cannot operate legally without a Memorandum of Understanding and INHOPE would not allow an application for membership to be submitted without the MoU.

Hotline analysts will share URLs containing CSAM with national law enforcement daily. Then the national law enforcement agency can confirm whether they are already investigating the people behind the images or not, and ultimately identify and rescue the children pictured who are being abused and find the perpetrator.

This is also where the importance of ICCAM, INHOPE's technology solution, comes in. The servers for ICCAM are hosted at INTERPOL. If an image has not been seen before it goes into ICCAM and will be transferred to ICSE for victim identification by criminal intelligence officers. ICSE is currently connected to 64 LEAs around the world[4] and INTERPOL is always looking to connect to more for the greatest chance to help survivors. The fact that ICSE is connected to so many experienced and knowledgeable criminal intelligence officers from around the world whose speciality is this crime type is unique.

Hotlines process CSAM reports made by the public. As some of these reports are legal, hotline analysts save valuable time of law enforcement officers. When hotline analysts send only the illegal reports to law enforcement officers, it means that the officers can focus on the most important work: investigations and victim identification. But in order to give this mandate to hotline analysts, law enforcement officers must ensure that analysts are properly trained and qualified to process CSAM reports correctly. Therefore, national law enforcement officers often provide training to hotline analysts and clear agreements are made between the collaborating parties on the procedures and best practices to be followed.

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[4] For a better understanding of ICSE and INTERPOL's Database, click here.

In order to support the capacity building of analysts, INHOPE organises tracing and content assessment trainings for all hotline analysts. This provides an additional certification and gives the national law enforcement agency more confidence that the hotline is an authorised, highly qualified body to process CSAM reports.

INHOPE also invites national and international law enforcement agencies to INHOPE's Hotline Training Meetings (HTMs) when relevant. These take place every six months and provide an opportunity for all participants to learn, exchange best practices and train together.

In some countries where there is no hotline, law enforcement also analyses reports to determine if they include CSAM, and they also act to have the content removed from the internet.

3.3 The role of industry and tech companies

CSAM is shared online on many kinds of platforms and channels including websites, social media, gaming platforms, and forums. Members of the public are able to anonymously report content to INHOPE's hotlines, who in turn deliver a Notice and Takedown order to the hosting provider.

Technology companies must also have the possibility for content to be flagged by users. Companies use technology to automatically detect CSAM when it is uploaded on their platforms, such as PhotoDNA[5]. Tech companies also collaborate with other companies and a variety of organisations to undertake research and campaigns and develop new technologies.

INHOPE has worked with some of its technology partners on campaigns that raise awareness of the ability to report CSAM. INHOPE's awareness-raising campaigns focus on the importance of reporting CSAM, and they also educate the public on what is illegal and how to report to a hotline.

Some of the tech titans such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, and Microsoft provide advertisement credits to INHOPE which have enabled these awareness-raising campaigns. INHOPE works with the national and regional offices of these tech companies to support the work of national hotlines in conducting awareness-raising campaigns. It is important to organise

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[5] a tool originally developed by Microsoft in 2009 for still images — to identify videos that have been flagged as child sexual abuse material (Microsoft, 2018)

such campaigns nationally, so that citizens become aware of CSAM and to establish working relationships with internet companies.

3.4 Report Box: The hotline-in-a-box technology

Report Box is a technology solution for organisations who wish to receive, process (classify and categorise), and store reports from the public of suspected CSAM in a safe and secure environment. Find out more about Report Box by going to our dedicated Report Box website. Learn how you can undergo a training with INHOPE's Hotline Training Manager to see if you'd like to use Report Box as a starter before you develop a fully functional hotline, which happens after you become a provisional member of INHOPE. See *Hotline Creation Timeline* to understand when that happens.

By ensuring a country and its government together take ownership of tackling online CSAM, the online child protection narrative comes to the fore. Key stakeholders start to understand the hotline's necessity in the eco-system, and they prioritise the safety, security, and protection of their country's young people, as well as supporting survivors. By also pushing the prevention imperative, we are raising resilience and awareness in a country's children and their parents, reducing the number of potential victims. Thus, we together create the ideal environment to develop Report Box and ultimately a hotline, which is the natural next step.

3.5 Why do we place a hotline at the centre of a country's national fight against CSAM?

Hotlines create, enable and nurture relationships and connections. Through them, they create strategies that contribute to the prevention of this crime.

As we've expressed already, relationships are the key to fighting online CSAM successfully and many stakeholders need to be involved. Having a hotline on the ground in your country means that a wider debate is sparked prioritising online child protection. As we stated in the outset of this Guide, relationships must be created to fight CSAM at all levels both nationally and internationally. With national leadership and investment, this issue becomes part of the everyday narrative at government level as well as bottom-up, with police, tech companies, hosting providers, NGOs, and child protection advocates. A joint approach is necessary to ensure the eco-system is in place where nationally hosted CSAM can be taken down rapidly wherever it is found. Once a hotline becomes part of the INHOPE family, reports you receive at your hotline are sent to the hosting country for removal too.

When a hotline has strong relationships with hosting providers and most crucially with law enforcement agencies (with the regular meetings that we encourage them to schedule) there are positive outcomes for all parties. The outputs of a good working relationship collaborating with government assures high level discussion and the possibility to influence many aspects of an online child protection strategy. Such changes could include influencing policy agendas and regulatory frameworks, creating educational advances in a country, changing national school curriculums, legislative amendments where necessary, and a recognition of much-needed campaigns to raise awareness and to fight online CSAM.

3.6 Web-reporting form: How do analysts receive reports?

Reports of online CSAM are submitted to hotlines via their reporting website. INHOPE will provide you with a template to develop your own reporting page, but you can also go to www.inhope.org and pick a country to view the reporting forms of other hotlines as examples to follow.

Analysts are notified by Report Box or their own (reporting and recording software) system that a report has arrived for analysis. The notification will be an email. They will then log into Report Box or their own system. Analysts must analyse and categorise the reports of online CSAM. Trained by INHOPE and INTERPOL, the hotline analysts are the 'first responders' who must process the reports, record the statistics about the reports they receive and process it according to their own hotline procedures as well as INHOPE's.

Why do we call analysts 'first responders?' We believe that internet users should have the natural reflex to know whom to send an image or video of online CSAM to. This should work in the same way as when citizens know that they call the police if there is a fire, or an ambulance if someone has had an accident. It is also our analysts who are in direct contact with all national stakeholders including the police, the industry, government, ISPs, and hosting providers in their countries.