



Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



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Child Sexual Abuse Material Created by Generative AI and Similar Online Tools is Illegal

The FBI is warning the public that child sexual abuse material (CSAM) created with content manipulation technologies, to include generative artificial intelligence (AI), is illegal. Federal law prohibits the production, advertisement, transportation, distribution, receipt, sale, access with intent to view, and possession of any CSAM,^{[1](#)} including realistic computer-generated images.

BACKGROUND

Individuals have been known to use content manipulation technologies and services to create sexually explicit photos and videos that appear true-to-life. One such technology is generative AI, which can create content — including text, images, audio, or video — with prompts by a user. Generative AI models create responses using sophisticated machine learning algorithms and statistical models that are trained often on open-source information, such as text and images from the internet. Generative AI models learn patterns and relationships from massive amounts of data, which enables them to generate new content that may be similar, but not identical, to the underlying training data. Recent advances in generative AI have led to expansive research and development as well as widespread accessibility, and now even the least technical users can generate realistic artwork, images, and videos — including CSAM — from text prompts.

EXAMPLES

Recent cases involving individuals having altered images into CSAM include a child psychiatrist and a convicted sex offender:

- In November 2023, a child psychiatrist in Charlotte, North Carolina, was sentenced to 40 years in prison, followed by 30 years of supervised release, for sexual exploitation of a minor and using AI to create CSAM images of minors. Regarding the use of AI, the evidence showed the psychiatrist used a web-based AI application to alter images of actual, clothed minors into CSAM^{[2](#)}.

- In November 2023, a federal jury convicted a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania registered sex offender of possessing modified CSAM of child celebrities. The Pittsburgh man possessed pictures that digitally superimposed the faces of child actors onto nude bodies and bodies engaged in sex acts³.

There are also incidents of teenagers using AI technology to create CSAM by altering ordinary clothed pictures of their classmates to make them appear nude.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For more information on altered images, see the FBI June 2023 PSA titled "Malicious Actors Manipulating Photos and Videos to Create Explicit Content and Sextortion Schemes" at <https://www.ic3.gov/Media/Y2023/PSA230605>.
- If you are aware of CSAM production, including AI generated material, please report it to the following:
 1. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children [[1-800-THE LOST](https://www.cybertipline.org) or www.cybertipline.org]
 2. FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center [www.ic3.gov]

REFERENCES

Website | Government Accountability Office | "SCIENCE & TECH SPOTLIGHT: GENERATIVE AI" | June 2023 | Accessed 26 December 2023 | URL: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/830/826491.pdf>

Website | Department of Justice | "A Citizens Guide to Child Pornography" | August 2023 | Accessed 26 December 2023 | <https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-pornography>

Website | Stanford Internet Observatory | "Identifying and Eliminating CSAM in Generative ML Training Data and Models" | 21 December 2023 | Accessed 26 December 2023 | URL: stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:kh752sm9123/ml_training_data_csam_report-2023-12-21.pdf

¹ The term "*child pornography*" is currently used in federal statutes and is defined as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a person less than 18 years old. See 18 U.S.C. § 2256(8). While this phrase still appears in federal law, "child sexual abuse material" is preferred, as it better reflects the abuse that is depicted in the images and videos and the resulting trauma to the child. ↩

²See <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdnc/pr/charlotte-child-psychiatrist-sentenced-40-years-prison-sexual-exploitation-minor-and> ↩

³See <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/registered-sex-offender-convicted-possessing-child-sexual-abuse-material> ↩