

When "Safe at Home" Is Not Safe

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments across the country and around the world issued "safe at home orders," causing much of society to remain at home, moving our world further online. But at home and online is not always a safe place, and a myriad of pandemic factors have left some of the most vulnerable children at an increased risk of exploitation and abuse.

With the closure of schools, vulnerable children are isolated from the support of friends, teachers, and school counselors. Perpetrators have taken advantage of increased, often unsupervised, time of minors online, as well as the challenges online service providers are facing in quickly removing content with work-from-home constraints. Some children are forced to shelter in place with their abusers, who for reasons including stress, financial instability, or even boredom have seized the opportunity to create child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and distribute it online.

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