



POLICY BRIEF: INTERVIEWING CHILDREN IN CASES OF ONLINE SEXUAL ABUSE AND INTRODUCING THE NICHD-ROCSA PROTOCOL

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KEY TERMINOLOGY AS USED IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS POLICY BRIEF

Child sexual abuse (CSA) refers to “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society” (WHO, 1999, p. 15).

Online child sexual abuse (OCSA) refers to the exploitation and sexual abuse of children using information and communication technologies. It encompasses acts committed wholly or partially via digital means, involving a variety of behaviours that directly or indirectly target children (Korkman and Joleby 2025; Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020; Drejer et al., 2024; Huikuri & Insoll, 2022).

Grooming refers to a manipulative process by which an individual prepares a child, significant adults, and the surrounding environment to facilitate abuse. This involves building trust, gaining the child’s compliance, and maintaining secrecy to prevent disclosure (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist 2006).

Sexting refers to online communication where which in some cases can be used by perpetrators to engage children in sending/receiving/forwarding sexual images or sexual texts via phones or other electronic computers (Ligiero et al., 2019).

Sextortion refers to using threats to engage children in sexual acts and/or disseminate sexual or intimate images or other material without consent (Greijer & Doek, 2016).

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) refers to photos or videos that portrays children in sexually explicit or suggestive ways. Much of this material is being shared on encrypted and anonymous Darknet forums between individuals with a sexual interest in children.

INTRODUCTION

The internet, along with its social media platforms and anonymous chat services, has transformed how sexual abuse of children is perpetrated, detected, and understood. In this policy brief, we use the term online child sexual abuse (OCSA) which encompasses a wide spectrum of exploitation, from grooming and sextortion to the live streaming of abuse, as well as more indirect forms of child sexual abuse (CSA), such as the use and dissemination of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Increasingly, OCSA occurs via digital technologies, often without any physical contact between the child and the perpetrator. This has consequences for not only the legal and investigative response but also how children themselves experience and disclose their abuse (Stänicke et al., 2024; Korkman and Joleby, 2025).

In a legal context, one of the key differences between CSA and OCSA is in the nature and availability of evidence. Crimes involving digital means often leave evidence in the form of photos, videos or electronic recordings of the abuse which reduce reliance on the child’s testimony during investigation. Nevertheless, the presence of such evidence does not necessarily simplify the investigative process. This policy brief presents a revised version of the well-researched NICHD-R Protocol developed to better suit forensic interviews in online abuse cases and address the unique dynamics of online victimisation (for a more thorough review, see Korkman & Joleby, 2025). Research has underscored the need for specialised approaches that ensure evidence is handled appropriately and interviews do not retraumatise victims (Joleby et al 2024; Katz, 2013; Mäenpää et al., 2022). Drawing on the experiences of Finnish police investigators specialising in OCSA, this brief also presents some of the main challenges investigators concretely face in these cases and explores how investigative interviews can be improved with the help of the revised protocol to support victims and gather reliable information. The aim is to inform child-centred investigative practices that reflect the realities of abuse in the digital age.

METHOD

This policy brief presents the main research findings related to interviewing children in OCSA cases and briefly describes the adaptation of the NICHD-R protocol for online cases (NICHD-ROCSA) as well as presents views by experienced criminal investigators, drawing on four thematic interviews with criminal investigators experienced in large-scale OCSA cases.

The participants in this study were experienced investigators with several years to decades of professional experience in investigating child-related crimes. Conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams between October 30 and December 19, 2024, each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. All interviews were transcribed, anonymized, and securely stored in an encrypted folder accessible only to authorized project personnel. The data was analysed using qualitative thematic content analysis (Braun and Clark 2022). Research approval was granted by the police authorities.

¹ In Finland, investigators are career professionals who have completed the Finnish Police University College’s basic police training programme. Criminal investigations involving child-related offences are typically conducted by detectives (rikosutkija) or criminal investigators (rikoskomisario) employed by the Finnish Police (Poliisi). These officers are working under the authority of the National Police Board (Poliisihallitus), which is part of the Ministry of the Interior. In general, police employees engaged in sensitive cases such as online child sexual abuse (OCSA) have specialised training in child interviewing, following evidence-based protocols such as the NICHD investigative interview protocol.

USING THE NICHD-ROCSA PROTOCOL AS A TOOL IN INVESTIGATIONS OF ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

This revised protocol developed specifically for cases of OCSA retains the core structure and ethical principles of the revised version of the NICHD (see Lamb et al., 2018) while integrating procedures designed specifically for cases involving strong digital or physical evidence. Like the NICHD-R, NICHD-ROCSA is not a script to be read aloud. It is a planning and scaffolding tool that helps trained interviewers navigate the complexity of OCSA investigations while remaining within the bounds of best practice (see Korkman et al., 2024). Interviewers should familiarize themselves with the available evidence in the case before conducting the interview but remain flexible in adapting their approach to the needs of each child and the dynamics of the specific case. The goal is to enhance children’s understanding of the interview context, reduce anxiety and shame, and support more complete and accurate disclosure—without compromising the non-suggestive, child-led approach that defines best-practice forensic interviewing.

DISCLOSURE AND TRENDS OF ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Police reports of OCSA have increased significantly over the past decade (e.g., Europol, 2023). A 2020 survey of Barnahus centres in seven European countries reported a rise in cases involving OCSA. Compared to traditional CSA cases, the disclosure process often differs in that it is typically initiated by the law enforcement rather than the victim, particularly in the context of large-scale investigations. Online cases more often involve platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, and anonymous chat services such as Random and Omegle.

Despite the growing number of identified cases, interviewees emphasized that only a small proportion of incidents ever come to the attention of law enforcement. Children have reported, in the context of investigations, that they are frequently exposed to sexual material on social media and routinely receive unsolicited contact requests. Previous research suggests that the normalisation of sexual content and unwanted interactions in children’s everyday digital environments is linked to significant underreporting of such incidents (Lunde & Joleby, 2023). When such encounters are perceived as a regular aspect of online life, distinguishing abusive or criminal behaviour becomes more difficult, thereby hindering disclosure and the initiation of formal investigations.

The large-scale OCSA cases described by interviewees are demanding in both volume and content. Several key challenges emerged related to investigating these crimes and interviewing child victims. A central theme was the lack of adequate police resources and investigator

experience. In the Finnish context, some areas have specialised task forces with experiences in handling extensive case series, the operational models of which could benefit others if shared through structured peer-to-peer learning. However, particularly in smaller towns, investigators often lack support from supervisors and colleagues, and the necessary skills in working with these cases may be lacking. Also, investigators must keep up with technological and terminology developments. One interviewee described the change as follows:

“A lot has really changed, and quickly. The first Snapchat cases were back in 2019. The suspect had recorded snaps of nude pictures using a screen recording program. Then we learned what terms like ‘streaks’ and ‘no ss’ mean. No ss means no screenshot, and you lose the streak if you don’t snap every day. Since then, these online sexual offenses have increased massively.” (Criminal investigator 1)

One major investigation by the Southwest Finland Police in 2022–2023 involved around 200 underage victims aged 6 to 15 from across Finland, with (only) 31 victims positively identified. The same perpetrator was linked to an earlier investigation (2021–2022) involving over 100 suspects who lured children into sexual activities via social media and paid for sex with minors. Interviewees noted that resources could be better allocated by ensuring that investigative interviews are conducted only with victims whose identities have been confirmed in advance.

“In one case, thousands of photos and videos were found on the suspect’s device, and we went through them trying to identify the children. Sometimes I send cropped photos via email to the guardian—pictures of bathroom tiles, sheets, boxers, or hoodies—to confirm we have the right child. From previous investigations, we learned not to assume but to verify the person before the interview. Otherwise, the interview wastes time and causes an awkward situation for everyone.” (Criminal investigator 2)

Interviewees reported that children frequently delay disclosure, deny involvement, or fail to recognize the abuse. Disclosure of events is likely to be more difficult in cases where offenders posed as romantic partners or peers (Joleby et al., 2020; Gemara et al., 2022). Even when confronted with explicit evidence, victims may downplay or reject their involvement due to shame, fear of blame, or difficulty reconciling their experiences with common perceptions of abuse (Leander et al., 2008; Katz et al., 2021). In order to support victims in disclosing their experiences, the criminal investigators emphasized the need for interviews to be tailored to each child’s age, developmental level, and background. Victims come from different backgrounds and receive varying levels of support from caregivers, which is a crucial factor in the investigations. Each case demands an individualized approach, and long investigative timelines can place additional strain on victims.

“Often the child says during the interview that they have been trying to actively forget the abuse for years because the event has been difficult to think about... They don’t want to remember it anymore. Then we start digging into it. After the interview, they try to push it back somewhere out of their mind, and then the court summon comes a couple of years later, and they have to sit there again, thinking about the same things. Something should be figured out about this.” (Criminal investigator 2)

Due to limited (or no) physical contact, OCSA cases are often underestimated in terms of severity. Cases are frequently perceived as less urgent or harmful compared to physical offenses. This came up also by one of the interviewees when discussing about cooperation with districts that do not have specialised units for child related crimes:

“I also see a challenge in the fact that when investigation assistance requests are sent around, at the supervisor or commissioner level there may be a perception that these cases do not need to be handled urgently, because they are “only” image-related incidents that happen online. Progress has certainly been made, but there is still sometimes the attitude that “we don’t have time for this right now, as we have other cases that are considered more serious.” The understanding of how traumatising these acts can be for the victims is still, in part, lacking – just as much as in cases involving physical contact.” (Criminal Investigator 3).

However, the psychological and emotional consequences of OCSA mirror those of offline abuse—post-traumatic stress, depression, guilt, and suicidality—and are even often intensified by the existence and potential spread of digital records (Jonsson et al., 2019; Finkelhor et al., 2023; Chauviré-Geib & Fegert, 2023). Children may feel “responsible” for the abuse, particularly when their own actions (such as taking and sending images) were manipulated by perpetrators (Joleby et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2023). This self-blame is compounded by societal misunderstanding of how such abuse unfolds in online environments, and by adults’ often limited knowledge of digital platforms (Gemara et al., 2023; Stänicke et al., 2024).

Therefore, law investigative processes must ensure that evidence is handled in a way that does not retraumatise or trigger distress or harm the quality of the testimony. Victims have described these interviews as deeply shocking and shame-inducing, particularly when they had not previously seen themselves as victims (Joleby et al., 2020). Additionally, young people may avoid open-ended disclosures or become less cooperative when interviewers adopt coercive or interrogative styles (Lindholm et al., 2014, 2015; Vale et al., 2024).

SUPPORTING THE CHILD IN THE INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW

Interviewees stressed that supporting the child and creating a trusting atmosphere are crucial to a successful investigation (as stressed in the NICHD-R and NICHD-ROCSA). They also stressed the need to support children throughout the interviews, reassuring them that they are not to blame, and emphasizing that responsibility lies solely with the adult perpetrator. Investigators also noted that it was sometimes beneficial to ask children why they did not want to recall the incidents, as this could lead children to verbalise possible fears that the interviewer could then discuss with them. However, interviewees also noted that children should never be pressured to speak before they are ready.

Age was noted as a significant factor in disclosure. The interviewees had experienced that younger children often struggled more to admit sending explicit images or engaging in sexual acts online. At the same time, some interviewees observed a growing ability among older youth to articulate even difficult experiences.

“Sometimes I’ve really admired how young people have been able to articulate their own sexuality and talk about it without shame, even if they have had experiences or interest, for example (for male victims), in experimenting with boys; they can talk about that quite openly. It’s amazing how young people nowadays can reflect on and discuss these things.” (Criminal investigator 4)

Interviewees noted that self-blame is common among victims of OCSA. Some children worried about breaking rules expressed by their parents regarding sending pictures, others, according to the interviews, felt embarrassment and distress upon discovering that the person they believed to be their peer had, in fact, coerced, manipulated, or deceived them. Perpetrators often build trust over time, making it harder for victims to recognize the abuse or assign blame correctly. These blurred boundaries can leave victims feeling responsible, which is why interviewees emphasized the importance of clearly affirming the child’s innocence during interactions. However, convincing victims of their innocence can be difficult, especially when their feelings are reinforced by blaming comments from parents. Police reassurance and clear guidance to parents to avoid blame or punishment can support recovery, though interviewees agreed that more comprehensive, multidisciplinary support is often needed in such cases.

“Sometimes they [children and youths] are so deep in that bubble of self-blame that it’s quite hard to break. Especially if parents or other adults have blamed the children for the incidents. Of course, when contacting parents [...] we (police investigators) try to explain to them that it’s not the child’s fault, and that the responsibility for the abuse lies solely with the suspected perpetrator. Nevertheless, you sometimes still hear those comments after the interview, when the youth may

return to the parents with ‘this must never happen again’ and the parent explains to the investigator that ‘we have talked about this at home.’ Even if a police officer tries to explain to the child in the interview that they are not accused of anything, the child may already have had the experience of being blamed and, which they may feel is the worst punishment, had their social media use restricted or faced other negative consequences.” (Criminal investigator 4)

“I go through everything with parents and children alike in the investigations, that this is all part of growing up and everyone makes mistakes. It’s crucial to stress that adults carry all the responsibility in these matters. It’s not the fault of the child victims. I go through that at the beginning and again at the end. Of course, it can come up several times during the interview too, it’s kind of a pep talk so they don’t forget that the interview is not about them being scolded or shamed at all.” (Investigator 3)

Understanding the emotions and backgrounds of children is important so that they can be approached sensitively, and the investigation does not further traumatize them. Particularly vulnerable children may include runaway youth under child protection, minorities, and those with trauma backgrounds or other special needs. Low self-esteem, lack of friends, or previous bullying experiences were mentioned as risk factors for being victimised by these types of crimes. One investigator emphasized the importance of persistence:

“With children who are runaways you can’t give up. That’s been a hard lesson for me — sometimes you have to sit with them several times. It’s not just ‘okay, you don’t want to talk,’ but you really have to try and understand their possible trauma background, why it may not succeed the first time [...] These young people often lack the level of assertiveness where they can say no. The words ‘No,’ ‘Don’t,’ ‘I don’t want to’ are not part of their vocabulary; they want to please others, which is why risk of becoming a victim is increased.” (Criminal investigator 3)

THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS IN ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

Interviewees identified parents’ limited understanding of internet and social media risks as a major challenge in detecting and responding to OCSA. This lack of awareness affects how quickly abuse is recognized, how seriously it is taken at home and school, and how likely it is to be reported. Parents often have little insight into young people’s online behaviour or the risks tied to sexual development in digital spaces. When contacted by investigators, parental reactions range from self-blame for allowing social media use to blaming the child for breaking agreed-upon rules.

“There’s a lot of cases especially with younger kids where the age is not even sufficient for opening Snapchat, and maybe it was opened together with the parents and the age is falsified, so in these cases there’s a lot of ‘we talked about these dangers,’ and some self-blaming like ‘why didn’t the child understand this.’” (Investigator 3)

Effective communication with parents involves helping them understand that children are never responsible for being sexually abused. Their ability to assess situations, recognize motives, or anticipate long-term consequences is limited, as is their capacity to protect themselves in digital – and other – environments.

Interviewees emphasized that while sexual development and exploration are natural parts of adolescence, these are deeply private matters that young people may not want to share with adults or investigators. Acts like sharing nudes or seeking online peer communities may stem from a desire for acceptance, leading some to feel they acted voluntarily and are partly to blame—even in cases of exploitation or crime. Discussing such topics can be highly uncomfortable, especially when revelations occur in front of parents. Interviewees noted that this can be particularly challenging for boys, especially if their sexual orientation is uncertain or if they believed they were engaging with the opposite sex but were in fact victimised by a male perpetrator. Fear of adult reactions—like blame or punishment—may delay disclosure. These challenges highlight the importance of respecting young people’s privacy and ensuring they are treated with sensitivity and without blame.

“For them [boys and young men] it’s a huge shame if it ever comes to light or is written about in the press [...] those are really tough situations for them. Plus, they may not yet know their own sexual orientation and the experiences may have been experiments or they may have thought they were with a girl, and it turned out to be a man. They have not told anyone, and such revelations are terrible for them.” (Investigator 3)

Interviewees emphasized the importance of situational assessment, especially with teenage victims. After initial contact with the guardians, investigators can often agree with the victims themselves on how further communication will proceed. Transparency—such as explaining what information has been shared or will be shared with guardians—is crucial for keeping the children informed about the questioning process. While parents have the right to review interview recordings in Finland, they rarely insist on doing so if investigators explain to them that it might not be in the best interests of their children that they do, and interviewing children without the presence of their parents were seen to increase the children’s willingness to participate. In the EAPL white paper on child interviewing (Korkman et al., 2024), it was recommended not to interview children in the presence of their parents.

Supporting parents was seen as crucial. Investigators play a key role in helping parents process the initial shock and respond calmly. Good practices include informing guardians about the prevalence of such cases and clearly affirming the child’s innocence. Younger children may reflect their parents’ emotional responses, which can impact both their well-being and their participation in the interview. Anticipating and managing parents’ reactions is essential to ensuring a sensitive and effective investigation.

“A lot depends on how the guardian reacts. We had just recently a girl who came for an interview, whose mother was very upset, and you could see it in the girl that she was anxious and found it hard to tell. It turned out okay after going through the situation, and afterward she said she felt better and relieved.” (Criminal investigator 1)

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING INFORMATION TO THE CHILDREN AND THEIR GUARDIANS

The interviewees stressed the need to provide parents with accessible and sufficient information about the suspicion and the investigation and suggested sending them an information package via email shortly after initial contact. Since receiving such news can be overwhelming, written materials help parents process the information at their own pace and reduces pressure on both parents and investigators.

The package should include:

- General information about the case
- Guidance on how to discuss the situation and upcoming interviews with the child
- Assurance that interviews will follow a child-centred approach, without forcing disclosure
- Information about Victim Support services and available assistance
- Details on the option for parents to review investigation materials / be informed about the investigation with a lawyer or victim support personnel rather than viewing recordings themselves



PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVIEWING CHILDREN AND USING THE NICHD-ROCSA BY PRACTITIONERS

Key recommendations for interviewing

- Do not use the ROCSA in a rigid manner but as a toolkit to tailor the interview to the individual case and developmental level and personality of the child
- Find your own voice in phrasing the questions
- Ensure interviews are not too long - if creating rapport takes a longer time, ensure there are breaks or divide the interview in more than one occasion
- Plan how to present existing evidence in a child-sensitive way
- Consider the privacy of the victim when presenting evidence for the suspect

Use the NICHD-ROCSA as a flexible tool:

The ability of the framework to support a thorough exploration of cases without missing key aspects was widely appreciated. However, it was stressed that flexibility and personalization in using the recommendations was important. Interviewees warned against using the ROCSA in a too rigid manner, “reading scripted questions aloud”, and emphasized the value of finding their own voice and adapting the structure to meet the needs of each child and situation.

Plan the interview based on the suggested phrasings:

Investigators had used the first version of the NICHD-ROCSA, which then has been adapted based on their and other practitioners’ experiences. A key strength of the revised protocol identified was its clear and comprehensive structure, which is especially helpful for less experienced investigators. The more experience one has on the interview guide, the better they are able to adapt it to fit their personal style. One experienced investigator highlighted how revisiting the framework can enhance interviews and provide fresh perspectives.

“There are such great phrasings [...] you get things like ‘this is well said, I’ll start using this,’ or ‘I might say it this way,’ or ‘I hadn’t thought of that,’ [...] but everyone edits it in their own style. When you don’t have a lot of experience, you might follow it too rigidly and don’t find your own voice [...] The framework makes you think that you need to prepare for each interview according to the needs of the case, so it’s not just an assembly line.” (Criminal investigator 3)

Length and fatigue:

Investigators noted that the rapport building, introduction and possible questions about internet use may strain the attention of child interviewees, something that must be kept in mind when applying the ROCSA. For instance, if the abuse relates to a specific app (e.g., Snapchat), broader questions about other platforms may be skipped or asked later if deemed relevant. If such questions are already covered in practice interviews they need not be repeated during the later phases of the interview.

Age-appropriate use:

Interviewees stressed the importance of letting the victim’s age guide the use and phrasing of questions. Some of the phrasings in the ROCSA were deemed particularly suitable for children under 13, whereas more flexibility was argued appropriate when interviewing older teens.

Sensitive evidence presentation:

A central challenge for investigators is to convey to children and youths, as sensitively as possible, that the perpetrator has images of them, avoiding increasing feelings of guilt and emphasizing the adult suspect’s responsibility. Most interviewees preferred to describe images verbally rather than show them. When identification was necessary, they used images without private parts or obscured sensitive content. Those who did show images for identification tried to choose ones without private areas visible or obscured them.

Privacy protection:

Concerns were raised about the personal details (e.g., usernames, hobbies) included in videos and transcripts, which may later become accessible to suspects. While investigators strive to protect privacy, some information transfer was experienced as difficult to avoid. Practitioners attempted to protect personal information about the victim through omitting asking about details not immediately relevant to the investigation (such as information about school, family, social media use other than related to the suspicion) or leaving them to the end (where they might be excluded if not of immediate relevance). For instance, information such as a username in the format firstname.lastname, should be reviewed to assess if and if so, how, it should be included in the interview/recordings.

“If the crime only involves one social media platform, then all other information like TikTok usernames or others would be extra info for the suspect. I have left that out completely or covered it only at the end.” (Criminal investigator 4)

“I think it’s wrong to discuss about everything on video since all that goes to the suspect. Couldn’t the contact creation and practice interviews be done beforehand and not transcribed? Then only when going into the topic would it be recorded or transcribed.” (Criminal investigator 1)

Use of video recorded interviews in court:

Using video-recorded interviews in court was experienced positively, sparing children from having to go through the events again, months or years later. Whereas in the Finnish context, this is the case for under 15-year-olds, older adolescents and young adults typically are heard in person in court – something interviewees called for to be changed. The importance of balancing children’s right to self-determination with procedural requirements was emphasized.

“Very often we have the evidence. We know that you [the crime victim] are this person. This is your photo. It’s identified from other systems or their social media profile, so we have the suspect and the evidence is here. Yet, I wonder why the child still has to be dragged here against their will, for example, if it happened when they were 14 and they are now 18 [...] could it be possible not to conduct that hearing procedure? [...] I’m not saying these crimes should be swept under the rug, definitely not, but I think the [criminal process] should be lighter [...]

My dream is that before I retire, everyone will be heard on video. That’s what I’m waiting for.” (Criminal investigator 3)

See also:

[NICHD-ROCSA](#) and [“Listening to young voices”](#)
(available in Finnish, English, Swedish and German)
[Policy brief on child interviewing \(EAPL\)](#)
(available in different languages)

In conclusion

The rise in OCSA presents complex challenges that traditional forensic interview methods often struggle to address. The revised NICHD-ROCSA Protocol responds to this need by suggesting a flexible, child-centred approach tailored to the digital context of abuse. It supports investigators in planning and conducting interviews particularly in cases for which there is existing evidence.

Interviews with Finnish law enforcement professionals highlight the protocol’s relevance in real-world cases, particularly in managing large-scale investigations involving dozens or even hundreds of victims. Despite the severity of these crimes, OCSA is still often underestimated, and victims may face delayed justice and support. Future research is still necessary to assess pros and cons of NICHD-ROCSA and the authors suggest field studies comparing interviews conducted with / without the NICHD-ROCSA to further develop the protocol.



RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO INVESTIGATING OCSA

- The number and scope of online exploitation cases require sufficient personnel resources, expertise, and technical support to be allocated to criminal investigations.
- Investigators should invest in interaction with guardians, as this promotes victim sensitivity and can facilitate the child’s or youth’s participation in the criminal process.
- Investigators involved in large-scale online crime series possess valuable specialized knowledge that should be shared with other investigators.
- Police officers, prosecutors, and judges should be offered training on social media platforms used by young people and on understanding digital culture. Training should emphasize victim-sensitive approaches, privacy protection, and the impact of interrogation situations on the child’s well-being.
- Investigators should be trained on how to present evidence gathered during criminal investigations to children or youths without risking retraumatization.
- Personal information of children and youths must be effectively protected at all stages of the investigation to avoid retraumatization and breaches of privacy.
- Clearer guidelines are needed for cooperation between prosecutors and investigators in situations where the victim does not want to participate in the criminal process.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO PREVENTION

- Parents should be offered support and training in digital parenting. Open and trusting communication between parents and children can reduce the risk of harmful situations and improve follow-up care after crises.
- Awareness about online sexual crimes and their risks should be increased among both youths and adults. Information should be clear, youth-oriented, and reach audiences on various platforms.
- The responsibility of guardians to comply with age limits set in social media platforms and chat services should be emphasized.
- It is important to provide youths with preventive support and safe adults (beyond caretakers) with whom they can discuss sexuality, online risks, and relationships without fear of punishment or criminal reporting.
- Sexual education for youths should be developed to support body image, recognition of personal boundaries, and self-determination.
- Social media and communication service providers should develop systems to detect and prevent exploitation and enable rapid response to harmful activities. Legislation and supervision should ensure that platforms take responsibility for protecting minors.

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