

24 arrested in internet sting

 By Theresa Gutierrez

August 22, 2006 (last updated 5:22 p.m.) - An undercover investigation in Indiana leads to the arrest of 24 alleged child predators. All are accused of using the internet to distribute pornography or arrange sexual encounters with minors.

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The month-long sting involved three different locations in Indiana and federal, state and local agents. Ten of the suspects are being held by the Porter County Sheriff's Department. More arrests are expected.

"The investigation involved 29 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. It also involved extensive coordination through my office and those that have been charged through today will be prosecuted," said Joseph VanBokkelen, U.S. Attorney.

The suspects allegedly engaged agents posing as underage females in conversations in the chat rooms. Most of the offenders made repeated attempts, according to police.

"That is our duty in law enforcement, to get on the internet and disrupt criminals out there that would do our children harm," said Tim Biertel, Secret Service Agent.

The suspects range in age from 22 to 47 years old and are from a number of Indiana towns. One of them, 24-year-old Matthew Hensley, is from Valparaiso. He helped the varsity girls basketball coach in Merrillville, Ind.

"We as parents should all be fearful that this type of predator exists. It's not in some nebulous unnamed area. predators exist in our own neighborhoods," said Chief David Lane, Porter County Sheriff's Dept.

Hensley allegedly attempted to coerce a 13-year-old girl into having sex with him and traveled to a proposed meeting place, police said. Those charges have serious penalties.

"The new penalty for each of the people charged in this case now is they face not less than two years mandatory jail time, a mandatory life imprisonment and \$250,000," said VanBokkelen.

Officials warn parents to keep their children's computers in a centrally-located place and monitor their movements online.

You can see the ABC7 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player 9 or higher to view this video. You can get it **FREE** by [clicking here](#). **NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 5-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips will play in a separate window on Mac OS X machines, you may also see a video help screen.**



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