

**December 1, 2021**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL: VERMILION COUNTY MAN CHARGED WITH DISSEMINATION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

**Chicago** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced that a Henning man was charged with disseminating child pornography. The case is part of Raoul's ongoing work, in collaboration with federal law enforcement agencies and local law enforcement officials throughout Illinois, to apprehend offenders who download and trade child pornography online.

Mark J. Kerkering II, 47, of Henning, Illinois, was charged in Vermilion County Circuit Court with three counts of dissemination of child pornography, each a Class X felony punishable by six to 30 years in prison, and 10 counts of possession of child pornography, each a Class 2 felony punishable by three to seven years in prison. Kerkering's bond is set at \$400,000.

"Children and their families are revictimized each time these horrific images are downloaded, shared or viewed," Raoul said. "I appreciate the assistance of the Vermilion County Sheriff's Department and the Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville Police Department, and I am committed to working with law enforcement through the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force to identify and apprehend individuals who exploit children online."

Raoul's investigators, with the assistance of the Vermilion County Sheriff's Department and the Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville Police Department, conducted a search of a residence Tuesday, Nov. 23, in the 200 block of North Loren Street in Henning and arrested Kerkering after discovering evidence of child pornography.

The public is reminded that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

The arrest is part of Attorney General Raoul's work to investigate and prosecute child pornographers in Illinois. Raoul's office, with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, runs the [Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children \(ICAC\) Task Force](#) that investigates child exploitation crimes and trains law enforcement agencies. The task force receives CyberTips, or online reports of child pornography, from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Over the last several years, CyberTipline reports have steadily increased; in fact, Raoul's office projects that reports to the ICAC during 2021 will increase by 23% over 2020.

In response to increasing reports of online child exploitation, Raoul announced a series of ICAC webinars aimed at giving parents, guardians and educators tools to help children and teens foster healthy online interactions. The free webinars, which began Oct. 7 and take place on the first Thursday of each month, will teach parents and guardians about the social media apps children and teens may be using, how to identify signs that a child may have been a victim of online child solicitation, and more. Interested parties should email [Karilyn.orr@ilag.gov](mailto:Karilyn.orr@ilag.gov) to register.

Illinois' ICAC Task Force is one of 61 ICAC Task Forces throughout the country and is comprised of a network of more than 250 local, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies, and the task force covers 101 of Illinois' 102 counties. Since 2019, the Attorney General's ICAC Task Force has received more than 13,353 CyberTips and been involved in more than 160 arrests of sexual predators. Since 2006, the Attorney General's ICAC Task Force has been involved in more than 1,780 arrests of sexual predators. The task force also has provided internet safety training and education to more than 953,500 parents, teachers and students and more than 23,100 law enforcement professionals.