

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

F-17

Examining Youth Encounters with CSAM

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Thorn runs the United States' most extensive online deterrence program, communicating directly with people searching for Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), disrupting their sense of anonymity and encouraging them to seek help. By suggesting help resources, we aim to change behavior and increase accountability. Since its launch in 2010, the program has had 85.9 million ad impressions, 2.8 million visitors to the program landing page, and seen more than 150,000 visitors go on to seek additional help.

We have increasingly heard of juveniles engaging with CSAM online for a variety of reasons, such as sexting with peers, sexual exploration, or grooming by strangers. In 2018, Thorn launched two new projects to understand both how kids are engaging with CSAM online and how they would engage with online support services.

The first was a help ad targeting teens who have seen something disturbing online and connecting them with help resources. The ad reached more than 1 million teens in the pilot run and we saw more than 5,000 teens click through to support resources such as Crisis Text Line, stopsextortion.com, and Stop It Now.

The second was a survey of young adults who may have encountered CSAM online. The survey asked nearly 2500 young adults, aged 18-20, if and how they explored their sexuality online, and if they'd ever encountered explicit imagery of a person they believed to be younger than them.

This session will discuss the unique considerations of juveniles engaging with CSAM and the development of, and insights from, the help ad and survey. Finally, the session will examine new approaches to prevention that focus on reducing vulnerability and increasing resiliency among kids and communities.

Learning Goals:

- Examine the different ways in which juveniles may engage with child sexual abuse material.
- Review findings of Thorn's 2018 help ad and survey of young adults who have encountered CSAM.
- Discuss prevention programming designed to reduce vulnerability and increase resiliency among kids and communities.

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Melissa Stroebel is the Senior Program Manager at Thorn, a non-profit dedicated to building technology to keep kids safe from online sexual exploitation. In her current role, Melissa oversees Thorn's strategic research initiatives and programming - including the country's most extensive online deterrence program. Prior to joining the Thorn team, Melissa worked with the NCMEC's Exploited Children Division conducting research, supporting technology development, and performing victim identification analyses. Melissa graduated from the University of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in history and George Washington University with a master's degree in forensic science.