

If Your Child Is Targeted

The steps you take right away shape everything that follows. Here's exactly what to do — in order.

1 Screenshot everything first

Before you do anything else, capture every message, image, profile, and interaction. Social media platforms delete accounts when content is reported, and your evidence disappears with it.

BrightCanary shows full message transcripts — take screenshots of those, too.

2 Write down all identifying info

Record every detail you have about the other party: username, gamer tag, phone number, email address. Note the platform, the dates, and how long the contact occurred.

The more specific you are, the better your chances of law enforcement being able to act.

3 Write a detailed statement

Document what happened in chronological order. Include how it made your child feel, and if there were threats, make clear that you feared for your child's safety.

That specific language matters for the police report. Don't leave it out.

4 Print everything and back it up

Make physical copies of your statement and all evidence. Save everything to two flash drives — give one to law enforcement, keep one.

Once you hand over evidence, you may not get it back.

5 Contact law enforcement, and escalate if needed

Report to your local police department. If the officer pushes back, ask for a supervisor. If needed, ask specifically for an ICAC-trained detective.

Most patrol officers have no cybercrime training. That's not a dead end — it just means you escalate.



Parent Tip

One more thing. If your child has inappropriate images circulating online, visit takeitdown.ncmec.org. The organization will work with platforms to locate and remove them.

"No one is allowed to make them feel bad about themselves online. No one is allowed to make them do something they should not be doing, such as extortion. If a predator is doing it to them, they are doing it to 10 other people as well, and they need to be stopped."

— Detective Rich Wistocki, cybercrime expert

These tips are based on expert guidance from Detective Rich Wistocki, founder of BeSure Consulting and child crime investigator.