

Aristotle International: Statement on ISTTF Final Report to Attorneys General

- The Final Report of the MySpace-funded Task Force ignores MySpace's ongoing destruction of data about how 50,000+ Convicted Sex Offenders (CSOs) have been using the giant Social Network Site (SNS), which claims 8.5M users under age 18 in the U.S.
- Report fails to mention that the data on 50,000+ CSOs found on MySpace in the last year was not even requested for study. This omission casts the Task Force's focus into serious doubt. *Concerned parents, Attorneys General, and others will wonder how a Task Force with a research group, all supposedly devoted to focusing on SNS safety, could fail to ask for such highly relevant data.*
- MySpace told the Task Force that it has no idea how many of its 100M+ users have registered with their real identities. The Report does not mention this fact.
- The AGs asked the Task Force to "focus on finding and developing online identity authentication tools," primarily for SNS in the US. *Objective not met. The Report barely mentions technical evaluation of authentication tools for SNS.*
- The AGs asked the Task Force to "establish specific and objective criteria that will be utilized to evaluate existing and new technology safety solutions." *Objective not met. Instead of establishing criteria as requested, the Report concludes that "developing standard metrics for youth online safety solutions would be useful".*
- The Report grossly overstates what the research tells us about predators' use of SNS. Most research is pre-SNS or preliminary, very early qualitative research on hypotheses that have not been thoroughly tested. It includes "online surveys" of 10-to-15 year-olds about sexual solicitation. There is little actual SNS research and none for CSOs on SNS.
- On the question of whether SNS such as MySpace increase the risk of victimization by online molesters, leading researchers warned in 2008 that "**caution should be used in interpreting this small amount of research about a new phenomenon**". The Report omits this warning and asserts that SNS do not increase risks.
- Whose views are reflected in the Report? It is not a consensus document. Few votes were taken. The Report is unfocused and addresses far too many non-SNS, non-technical issues. Many recommendations are generic, obvious, and redundant. Preserving anonymity on SNS -- even for sex offenders -- appears to be an overriding principle. *We must answer the technical questions we were asked as a **technical** task force, instead of acting primarily as self-appointed **policy** advisers. Study of CSOs on SNS must also begin without further delay, excuse, or filibuster.*
- Report fails to include proposed Aristotle recommendation concerning notice to teen (or parents) when SNS knows a CSO has contacted the minor on the site. (Proposal analogous to "community notification" for CSOs in the outside world).

- Three questions must be asked of MySpace: 1) *Will it immediately offer researchers the data on the 50,000+ known CSOs' use of MySpace?*; 2) *Will it immediately stop destroying records of known CSOs' use of MySpace?*; and 3) *Will it notify minors/parents (changing TOS if needed) when it learns that they have been contacted by a CSO?* (If not, we urge hearings/AG investigations).