

September 8, 2023

To: Dan Wright
CC: Kathleen Hambrick
Audra Garcia
Aracely Yates
Norman Chin
Heidi Brodt
Bruce Glant

From: Stephanie Lee, WSIPP Director

RE: CAGE Rebuttal to WSIPP Report: *Internet Stings and Operation Net Nanny*

Dear Mr. Wright and colleagues,

Thank you again for your email and your response to our report. I appreciate the time and effort you and your colleagues spent putting together your rebuttal. It's clear this is a really important issue to you all. There were a couple places where we need to clarify the information we reported (I mention them below), and we are glad you pointed them out.

WSIPP is an explicitly nonpartisan research organization, and I want to clarify that we do not work for the Washington State Patrol or any other agency. Our only agenda is to provide the legislature with rigorous answers to the research questions they assign us to study. We do not take sides on policy, but rather investigate specific questions of interest to the legislature. I first want to acknowledge that you pose many questions and comments in our rebuttal that we simply cannot speak to. We were assigned specifically to investigate:

- 1) the current research on "Net Nanny-type sting operations," and
- 2) how "the characteristics of individuals convicted under net nanny stings" compare with "individuals convicted of child sex offenses through other avenues."

Whether or not internet sting operations are good or bad or the details of how they are conducted is not something we were asked to comment on, nor given the resources for. Many of your comments center on these questions. Again, we simply were not assigned to answer these questions--the scope of the study was narrow, and the funding and the time allocated for the study matched that narrow scope. For example, there are specific questions about characteristics of criminal history and sentencing outcomes that were fairly straightforward and efficient to examine given the data we had access to. However, evaluating the specifics of individual cases would have taken far more time than we had available for the study.

Next, I'll answer the questions you posed at the end of your response.

1) *Q: Did the WSP help in any way with writing any of this report (outside of providing data, and press releases)? Including any rewrites or edits of this document?*

A: No. The content of the report was exclusively generated by WSIPP researchers. The research team did ask for feedback from WSP to make sure our description of how the program is intended to work was accurate.

2) *Q: Please provide us a list of the ADULT and TEENAGE dating sites claimed to be used for these stings.*

A: The two dating sites that allowed teenage users were Skout and Meetme. During the time of these stings, these platforms could be joined by both teens and adults. We will edit language in the report to clarify this point.

3) *Q: Would it be possible to get a copy of the data you used for this study?*

A: No. The data we used for the study is governed by data-sharing agreements between WSIPP and WSP, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Department of Corrections. We are not allowed to share that beyond specific WSIPP researchers who are authorized to access and analyze the data. If you need the data, you could request the data directly from WSP, AOC, and DOC.

Throughout the rebuttal, you also asked several questions about the facts we reported. Beyond the criminal conviction data analysis, we relied on the published research literature combined with multiple publicly available data sources to conduct our review of the research on "Net-Nanny-type sting operations." This is the kind of analysis we do frequently for the legislature, and we followed our standard procedures here. A few specific responses:

- You pointed out a discrepancy in your arrest information with what we reported, specifically that you found 20 arrests in 2022 and we reported 19. You note that the last arrest was after the operation ended-- in footnote 5 on page 4, we note that our numbers may vary and explain the reason for this particular discrepancy of the report.
- You also point out that we may be missing some information about the funding for Operation Net Nanny, which we are digging into--we will update this section if we discover new information.
- You asked if our study "tracked multiple charges here or just the main charge" on page 17 of the rebuttal document. We included all charges, which is why the percentages add up to more than 1.
- You questioned the statistical significance of our comparisons, specifically the difference between the net nanny group and the comparison group in Felony Sex Offense with a Child Victim (2.9% versus 6.3%). On the face of it, this does look like a large difference, but this comparison did not meet our threshold for statistical significance, which was $p < .01$. We hold ourselves to a high standard of proof, and because this difference did not meet the standard, we can't say there is a true difference between the groups.
- You asked at several points about the possibility of comparing the characteristics of net-nanny convicted folks to the general population. The data sources we were able to access for this study are limited to criminal-justice involved individuals, so this was not possible in our study.

Thank you again for your response.