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DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Handling of Tips of Hands-on Sex Offenses Against Children

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today [the release of a report](#) on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) handling of tips of hands-on sex offenses against children. This audit followed up on issues identified in the DOJ Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) July 2021 report on the FBI's handling of allegations against Lawrence Gerard Nassar (OIG Nassar report). Between October 1, 2021, and February 26, 2023, the FBI opened 3,925 cases that allegedly involved a hands-on sex offense against a child or similar offense. As part of this audit, we reviewed 327 incidents.

The DOJ OIG found that further improvements are needed to build upon the FBI's recent changes to its crimes against children and human trafficking (CAC/HT) program to ensure it appropriately addresses child sexual abuse allegations.

The OIG's findings included the following:

- **Child Sexual Abuse Allegations Requiring Immediate FBI Attention.** During our audit, we flagged 42 incidents, 13 percent of the incidents we examined, for FBI headquarters review because we believed they may require immediate attention. The types of concerns identified included: (1) cases that lacked any recent investigative activity or case updates, logical investigative steps, or referrals to appropriate agencies, (2) leads that were not appropriately covered, and (3) instances of substantial non-compliance with FBI policy.
 - **Suspected Child Abuse Cases Were Not Reported to Appropriate Agencies.** All FBI personnel are considered mandatory reporters, meaning that they must report suspected child abuse to the relevant state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) law enforcement agency and social services agency. We identified substantial non-compliance with these requirements. Specifically, we found no evidence that FBI employees complied with mandatory reporting requirements to SLTT law enforcement in 47 percent of the incidents we reviewed or to social services agencies in 50 percent of incidents we reviewed. Of the reports that were made, we found that only 43 percent were made within 24 hours, as required by FBI policy.
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- **Lack of Evidence of Transferring and Responding to Hands-on Sex Offenses in Compliance with FBI Policy.** Since the time of the FBI's handling of the child sexual abuse allegations against Lawrence Gerard Nassar, the FBI implemented a new tips management system with additional controls for active and ongoing abuse allegations, issued interim guidance requiring such allegations to be acted upon within 24 hours, and updated its policy to require verbal contact and confirmed receipt when transferring CAC/HT complaints or cases between FBI field offices. However, we found the FBI did not document and process all allegations in its new system. Additionally, in the incidents we reviewed, we found 40 percent of the active child sexual abuse allegations did not include evidence the FBI responded within 24 hours and 73 percent of transfers between field offices did not include evidence of verbal contact and confirmed receipt.
- **Victim Services Were Not Offered to All Eligible Victims.** Both FBI and DOJ policy require the FBI to identify eligible victims and provide them information about available victim services and case status updates. For 36 percent of the eligible victims identified during our review, we found no evidence that they received appropriate services or updates.
- **Forensic Interviews of Minors Were Largely in Compliance with Requirements.** FBI policy states that FBI employees should conduct interviews of minors regarding alleged abuse in person and utilize personnel properly trained in forensic interviewing techniques. In the relevant interviews we reviewed, we found 95 percent were conducted by appropriately trained personnel and 98 percent were conducted in person.
- **High Agent Caseloads in its CAC/HT Program.** We identified agents in the FBI's CAC/HT program with high caseloads, which can affect an agent's ability to immediately respond to incoming allegations. The number of CAC/HT allegations received by the FBI has increased over the past several years and FBI officials cited resources as a significant challenge for the FBI's CAC/HT program.
- **Non-Compliance with CAC/HT Program Policies and Procedures Indicates Need for Additional Training.** We identified non-compliance with established policies and procedures in several areas we tested. Additional training in the FBI's CAC/HT program is needed to improve compliance in these areas.

The DOJ OIG made 11 recommendations to improve the FBI's management of its CAC/HT program. The FBI concurred with all 11 recommendations. Prior to today's release of the report, the FBI took corrective action on two of our recommendations and we have closed those recommendations.

Report: Today's report can be found [on the OIG's website](#).

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