

## CONGRESSIONAL OPENING STATEMENT OF SHARON W. COOPER, MD

I. My name is Sharon Cooper and I am an adjunct professor of Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Medicine. I have worked as a Pediatrician for 30 years and in the area of Forensic Pediatrics since 1980. As a doctor who works with maltreated children, a Forensic Pediatrician has an advanced understanding of the nexus of medicine and the law, and focuses on assuring that children will be correctly diagnosed as victims of child maltreatment when that diagnosis is considered. Serving as a multidisciplinary child abuse team member for 27 years, I have examined thousands of children who have been the victims of child sexual abuse as well as other forms of child maltreatment. I have lectured throughout the United States and internationally, providing more than 200 trainings in the areas of child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect and child homicide. I spent 21 years as an active duty Army officer providing general Pediatric, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatric and Forensic Pediatric care for children of members of all branches of the armed forces. I continue as an instructor for the Army Medical Education Department Center and School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas which provides multidisciplinary team training to Family Advocacy Program members in all branches of the services. Since my retirement with the rank of colonel from the United States Army 9 years ago, I have focused my areas of expertise on child sexual exploitation, child and youth development and behavior, and all aspects of child maltreatment. I have been an instructor at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in Alexandria, Virginia for nearly six years, and have provided training on the victim impact on children depicted in child sexual abuse images and exploited through prostitution. In addition, I teach prosecutors,

law enforcement officers, judges and health care providers how to medically analyze child pornography images. I have provided even more in depth training regarding the determination of probable victim ages to the analysts of the Child Victim Identification Program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as well as similar professionals of the Canadian Cybertipline. Working with the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Microsoft Corporation, I have provided similar training to law enforcement officers in the US, Canada, Europe, Russia, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

- II. As a Forensic Pediatrician I have provided direct patient care to several children who have been sexually abused and pornographically photographed or videotaped. These clinical evaluations have included family and investigator interviews, review of the pornographic images, victim medical interviews, behavioral analyses, and full medical examinations as well as case conferences after the medical assessment. I have also evaluated children who have been exploited through prostitution both from within their families as well as by acquaintances and intimate partners. In addition to having evaluated children and youths victimized in this manner, I have also analyzed thousands of images of child pornography. These images were stored as computer files, videotapes, DVDs, Polaroid pictures, and published images in trade magazines. The overwhelming majority of this contraband was computer stored images and videotapes, confiscated during investigations by Internet Crimes against Children (ICAC) teams and almost all federal criminal investigative agencies. I have published in this area to include an article with Attorney Damon King of the Child Sexual Exploitation and Obscenity Section. of the Department of Justice. I have served as an expert witness in

family court and criminal prosecutions involving child pornography in state, federal and court martial proceedings.

- III. I have recently completed a textbook on the subject of child sexual exploitation in 2005 which has been endorsed by the National District Attorney's Association. The text, entitled *Medical, Legal, and Social Science Aspects of Child Sexual Exploitation: A Comprehensive Review of Pornography, Prostitution, and Internet Crimes* has four other co-authors: Richard Estes, DSW, ACSW, Angelo P. Giardino, MD, PhD, FAAP, Nancy D. Kellogg, MD, and Victor I. Vieth, JD. This compendium of nearly 60 contributors from 8 different countries provides a thorough background of the five types of child sexual exploitation: child pornography, prostitution of children and youths, cyber-enticement, child sex tourism, and the human trafficking of children and youths, both domestically and internationally. The text has a supplemental CD-ROM which includes further information in this area with case reports, training modules, selected readings and in particular an emphasis on the medical care of victims of these forms of child abuse.
- IV. Child sexual exploitation is cited to be the most underreported form of child abuse. Child pornography on the Internet in particular has as yet untold impact upon victims. The possession and distribution of these images, which are in fact, digital crime scenes, promotes a need for newer, more plentiful and more graphic images. The two most commonly cited reasons that individuals collect these images are for sexual gratification through masturbation and as a plan for action. Criminology studies to date from the US Postal Inspection Service, the Toronto Child Sexual Exploitation Unit and the Federal

Bureau of Prisons here in the US reveal that those who possess these images have a 1 in 3 chance to as high as 3 out of 4 chance of having already sexually abused a child. Further research from the National Juvenile Online Victimization (N-JOV) Study (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2003) has revealed that from 2000-2001, offenders primarily collected child pornography of children between the ages of 6 and 12 years. It is important to know, though those offenders are often diverse in the content of their child pornography collections and during that same period, nearly 50% of collected images were of children less than 5 years old. Such young victims are prime targets for sex offenders because of their preverbal nature and the fact that they often unable to be made competent on a witness stand in criminal proceedings.

- V. Child pornography constitutes insult to injury for a victim: the injury is child sexual abuse in all of its methods of victimization. The insult is the memorialization of that exploitation for an untold amount of time. Many of the images which I see on a regular basis show severe vaginal and anal assault against toddlers, bondage of these children with gags in their mouths, ligatures around their necks, and on occasion, physical beatings in conjunction with video clips of brutal oral, vaginal and anal penetration. In addition, recent research has shown that 88% of girls who have been sexually abused do not make a disclosure during childhood (Hansen, 1999). Numerous case examples of victims of child sexual abuse and pornography production, denial of the existence of photos or videotapes etc. is also very common, even though children do acknowledge the sexual abuse. Training for interviewing and treating such children and youths as well as those who have been groomed into compliant victimization is both essential and an

immediate priority. Programs such as *Finding Words* and other forensic interviewing curricula must include the evaluation of these types of victims.

VI. It is very important to understand that child pornography is a common thread in all forms of child sexual exploitation: prostituted children and youths, cyber-enticement, child sex tourism and human trafficking of children. The bottom line is that children have become a commodity for a practice that seeks to normalize sexual harm. Preferential sex offenders who produce these images have been reported to be responding to special requests from like minded online offenders, or strictly as a means of financial gain. Infant and toddler sexual abuse is a frightening and sobering reality particularly in light of the National Institute of Justice report in 1994 which cited that victims of child sexual abuse were twenty-eight times more likely to be arrested in their lives for prostitution, than children who had never been sexually abused. Recent high profile multiple victim and multiple offender sex rings have alerted those of us who work in this area to the fact that immense technology exists in support of these types of heinous crimes against our most important national treasure, our country's future, our children. I urge you to read the attached document, "Unto the Third Generation" written by one of our co-authors, Attorney Victor Vieth, Director of the American Prosecutor's Research Institute's National Child Protection Training Center. I look forward to providing whatever information that I can to the members of this committee and express my appreciation for the opportunity to answer any of your questions.