



October 9 - 11, 2026 Fall Conference



FEATURED SPEAKER

ERIC SZATKOWSKI

THE DARK SIDE OF CYBERSPACE: THE INTERNET, SMART PHONES, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Overview

This hybrid session, both in-person and virtual, takes place Saturday, October 10, from 10:15 am -11:30 am CST

While digital technology offers a world of communication, education, and entertainment options for all ages, it also has a dark and dangerous side families and caregivers must be aware of.

This fast-paced presentation takes a deep dive into the cyber exploitation of children, and how it is facilitated by addictive social media, unenforced regulations, artificial intelligence, and much of the culture. A must see for anyone who wants to better protect kids from psychological, moral, emotional, and even physical harm facilitated by technology. Attendees will learn techniques used by predators, the types of kids who are most vulnerable, and the link between the growing victimization of children, pornography and the sexualized culture.

Eric reinforces his message with specific examples of how predators corrupt every platform and device used by our kids to take advantage of them. Eric also shares ideas for parents and caregivers on how to help kids avoid getting hurt, and how to respond when something happens.

Eric combines his investigative expertise with his own personal experiences as a husband and father who protected his kids as they grew up with digital technology, and his current concern of what his grandchildren will face as they get older.

Topics include the latest on potential dangers of social networking apps, as well as disturbing trends of sexting, cyber bullying, and webcam exploitation. Parents/caregivers will be challenged to be role models and protectors instead of “best friends” to their kids. Eric also explains how filters and monitoring software should be used to support their primary mission of raising kids in a safe, caring, AND high-tech environment.

Designations of Credit

WFAPA designates this session for 3 continuing foster care education clock hours.



Speaker Information

Eric Szatkowski began his work protecting children in the late 1990's, at the beginning stages of online child exploitation confronting our country. He quickly earned a reputation as one of the top officers in the nation in apprehending sexual predators who use the Internet and digital technology to exploit children. Now, as a retired Special Agent, Eric focuses on cyber safety through dynamic presentations for a variety of audiences.



Eric was a Special Agent with the Wisconsin Department of Justice/ Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) for nearly 25 years, spending the majority of his service assigned to the state's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force in Milwaukee. He was named the Wisconsin Attorney General Law Enforcement Officer of the Year in 2014, and was named a Special Agent-in-Charge in 2015.

During his law enforcement career, Eric was responsible for the arrest of approximately 200 men from Wisconsin and around the country, many of whom traveled various distances to have sex with what they believed to be an underage boy or girl. Eric's arrests also include those who sexually assault children, distribute, possess, and/or produce child pornography, expose children to harmful materials, or engage in child sex trafficking. Eric's law enforcement experience also included undercover murder-for-hire, homicide, cold-case homicides, tracking fugitives, and drug enforcement.

Eric's dynamic presentations on Internet and mobile phone exploitation of children have been seen by approximately 300,000 people in Wisconsin and the U.S. Audiences include parents, middle school and high school students, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, child welfare advocates, correctional and social workers, civic groups, business professionals, doctors, and countless other groups dedicated to helping children.

Eric's presentations inspired the drafting and passage of new legislation in 2006, Wisconsin Assembly Bill 942. This law significantly increased the levels of felonies for online child exploitation, increased maximum prison penalties, and implemented presumptive minimum prison terms for online predators. Eric testified in court as an expert in the online sexual exploitation of children, and provided assistance to dozens of law enforcement agencies in this area of police work. Between 2010 and 2015, he organized and coordinated week-long schools for WI DOJ to train Wisconsin police officers in the investigation of online child exploitation.

Eric's work was recognized by many organizations, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and the Wisconsin Association of Homicide Investigators.

Before his law enforcement career, Eric spent seven years in broadcast journalism. He was a news reporter, anchor and producer, working at TV stations in Milwaukee, Oklahoma City, and Madison, where he broke many stories as one of that market's best investigative reporters. Eric graduated with honors in 1983 from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communication. In 2014, he earned a Master's Degree in Christian Doctrine from the Graduate School of Theology at Marquette University. For the past 10 years, Eric has continued helping kids and families as a part-time chaplain at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. He also works for Ascension Health Care and Froedtert Hospitals in Milwaukee.