

Southern Virginia Law Enforcement to Launch 'Deputy' AI Assistant to Protect Children from Sextortion on Social Media

FLOYD, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, July 26, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a groundbreaking move to combat the escalating threat of sextortion on social media, a group of Southern Virginia law enforcement officials is set to launch '[Deputy](#),' an AI assistant by Skyll Inc. designed to protect children from predators and cybercriminals. The Deputy AI assistant offers real-time education on social media safety and immediate crisis response. Utilizing advanced, publicly available technology from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Deputy can swiftly file reports to law enforcement and remove explicit materials, ensuring children's safety online and intervening when threats arise.



Members of Skyll and the Safe Surfin' Foundation with the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Led by Sheriff Mike Brown of the Department of Justice's Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, the initiative benefits from over 23 years of dedicated experience in protecting children online. Sheriff Brown is the founder of the Safe Surfin' Foundation, which has partnered with Skyll to bring Deputy to schools across the U.S. in January 2025.

Deputy is one technology built by Skyll to deliver 'Yourspace,' a social media safety education program created jointly by Skyll with the Safe Surfin' Foundation. [Mandated by West Virginia Senate Bill 466](#), this law requires all public schools in the state to implement the curriculum, known as Safety While Accessing Technology, reaching over 260,000 students. The success of this initiative has generated interest from other states, including Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, and Mississippi.

Deputy is more than a technological tool; it is a lifeline for children navigating the digital world.

The AI assistant, which utilizes advanced empathetic AI technology (eLLM), understands and emulates human emotions, providing guidance on social media safety, mental health support, and crisis intervention.

This innovative AI assistant communicates using the likenesses of popular social media influencers, making children feel safe and understood by interacting with personalities that they regard as peers. Users can choose from headlining partner influencers like Niki Victoria, whose likenesses have been incorporated into the AI. Niki Victoria, with over 3.7 million followers across Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, believes that by interacting with an AI that children trust and view as a peer, they are more likely to open up and feel supported during critical moments.

Deputy can file reports and remove explicit materials swiftly by leveraging technologies from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, including CyberTipLine and Take It Down. These features allow Deputy to file reports for investigation by the Department of Justice's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces and facilitate the takedown of explicit materials, providing reassurance and making critical resources easily accessible during moments of panic.

In a demonstration video, an AI twin states, "I can chat by voice or video, give advice, and even take action when you need me. Deputized by Sheriff Mike Brown and the Safe Surfin' Foundation, I use technology from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to file reports to law enforcement, remove unauthorized explicit photos, and help shut down cybercriminals to keep you safe on social media.

Sextortion, which involves persuading a minor to send explicit photos online and then threatening to make the images public unless the victim pays money or engages in sexual favors, has seen a staggering 1,000% increase in the past 18 months, partly due to the activities of a loosely organized group known as the Yahoo Boys operating from Nigeria. The psychological toll on victims can be devastating, often leading to severe trauma or, in extreme cases, suicide. Recent high-profile cases have highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to protect children.

Meta's recent takedown of 63,000 Nigerian Instagram accounts involved in sextortion schemes underscores the enormity of the problem. "If each of these 63,000 accounts targeted just 10 kids, that's potentially 630,000 victims already. This is undoubtedly just the tip of the iceberg," said Graeme Page, CEO and co-founder of Skyll. "We need comprehensive solutions to protect our children."

Deputy is set to launch in January 2025 as part of a pilot program for Yourspace in participating schools. This initiative marks a significant step forward in ensuring the safety of children on social media.

About Skyll:

Founded by Graeme Page and Marvin Winkler, Skyll empowers potential through the transformative power of education, enabled by unconventional technology. Skyll is proud to be the exclusive distributor of Yourspace, a social media safety education curriculum program developed jointly by Skyll and the Safe Surfin' Foundation, in collaboration with law enforcement, elected officials, and government-funded nonprofits. This program equips students with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from predators and criminals on social media, teaching them to recognize, avoid, and respond to potential dangers.

About the Safe Surfin' Foundation:

Founded in 1998 by Sheriff Mike Brown of Bedford County, Virginia, The Safe Surfin' Foundation works with the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, formerly known as Operation Blue Ridge Thunder. Sheriff Brown was the Administrator of the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task force for over two decades. Through its interactive website, special events, printed materials, PSAs, and other educational initiatives, Safe Surfin' educates the public about internet crimes involving children and works proactively to increase cyber safety awareness for internet users of all ages. Safe Surfin' works with the U.S. Department of Justice, school systems, public libraries, law enforcement agencies, and corporate sponsors to expand its educational outreach.

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