

**School District Advisory #16**  
**Virtual Kidnapping – Trend Alert**  
Effective Date: November 7, 2016



Geo Listening will notify client and non-client school district leaders when it has discovered safety or disruptive actions trending on Social Networks or from recognized studies, authorities or news agencies. These advisories will be sent to leadership via email.

As you all know students post many disparate pieces of personally identifiable information online such as: Date of Birth, Class Schedules, Location, when their parents are out of town, type of car they drive, Driver's licenses, license plates, etc. All of these pieces of information are a part of a digital footprint that the student leaves for those wishing to capitalize on it in illegal ways and ways that put both the student and families at risk.

As you can see in the clip below from NBC News and may have seen covered by other local or national news agencies we are seeing along with Law Enforcement a growing trend of virtual kidnappings. This occurs when someone can gather enough information about a student from their online posts to present to a legal guardian that they actually have their child. Because students post such a level of detail about their whereabouts and what they have going on that windows of opportunity can open up for the virtual kidnapper to exploit.

These windows can be created by a student posting that they are going to a movie, hiking, etc. where they may not be reachable for a period of time by a parent or school official. These crimes are targeting the affluent, which is another criterion that the students have disclosed in their social postings or those of their friends. All of the documented cases thus far have occurred from a foreign land into the US via phone.

We urge you to discuss with your local law enforcement agency and add to any parent and student facing assemblies or meetings that you may have with the respective groups. Your local law enforcement agency will more than likely be willing support and provide other details on if this has occurred in your area and what can be done in case it does occur.

The FBI has been issuing warnings related to this since 2015, but it does appear that those perpetrating these illegal actions have become more organized and systematic in their targeting. Cities across the nation have covered the story in recent weeks.

<http://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/fbi-warns-of-growing-number-of-virtual-kidnapping-scams-800489027901>