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Atlanta group: Craigslist must do more to fight child prostitution  
Classified advertising site to drop 'erotic services' ads

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Atlanta children will be a little safer now that Craigslist will no longer post prostitution and other "erotic services" ads, but additional precautions are needed, an Atlanta anti-child prostitution group said Wednesday.

The popular classified advertising Web site announced Wednesday that it will drop the "erotic services" category in the U.S. in seven days and now review all adult ads posted.

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Craigslist will replace it with an "adult services" category that will include only "legal" adult service providers, Craigslist spokeswoman Susan MacTavish said.

"Each posting to this new category will be manually reviewed before appearing on the site, to ensure compliance with Craigslist posting guidelines and terms of use," MacTavish said in a statement.

Craigslist officials said they hope fees will eliminate illegal activities from being posted. The new adult service postings will cost \$10. However, once they are approved, the cost will be lowered to \$5.

On Tuesday, more than 500 ads for erotic services in the Atlanta area were posted.

While the changes will help, Craigslist employees needed to be trained, said Kaffie McCullough, director of Atlanta anti-child prostitution group A Future. Not A Past.

"I'm glad because with all the press Craigslist had been getting it was just way too easy for someone to buy an underage girl on the Internet," McCullough said. "But I don't honestly know if it will make any difference if they just go to another section."

The Craigslist change comes after requests from attorneys general in Connecticut, Illinois and Missouri.

The attorneys general asked for the change last week after the murder of a masseuse. Police charged a Boston medical student with the death, saying the two met on Craigslist.

Georgia Attorney General Thurbert E. Baker supports the Craigslist changes, but wants to wait to see how well they are enforced.

"We're waiting to see how effectively they implement these agreements to determine if additional steps are needed," said Russ Willard, Baker's spokesman.

"We are constantly on the lookout with the new frontier of social networking sites to see if additional safeguards are needed to protect the public at large, particularly children."

In November, Baker was part of a group of attorneys general from across the nation who negotiated a deal with Craigslist to crack down on prostitution ads, Willard said.

McCullough said she fears the illegal sex providers will just move elsewhere.

"It's going to show up somewhere else," she said. "It's a step, it's not going to end the problem."

As recently as February, 176 girls were prostituted for sex on Craigslist, she said.

That was the same month two people pleaded not guilty to charges they used Craigslist to pimp a 17-year-old girl in Atlanta. They posted nude photos of the girl on Craigslist and claimed the girl was 19, according to the FBI.

In 2007, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin demanded Craigslist take responsibility and remove child prostitution ads.

"Children are being marketed through Craigslist," Franklin said in August 2007.

At the time, Atlanta police said 85 percent of sexual liaisons that men arranged with boys and girls in Atlanta was through Craigslist and similar sites.

Atlanta police did not respond to requests for up-to-date numbers and Franklin's spokeswoman did not return a phone call Wednesday.

Craigslist officials insist that its community flagging system and other screening help cut down on illegal ads.

Craigslist officials said they have already donated all of the net revenues from the erotic services ads to charity. They did not specify which charity.

However, they declined to say how the revenue from the adult services ads will be used.

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