

Hailey's Law

In honor and loving memory

of

Hailey Paige Buzbee

2008-2026

"The changes we make together will be rooted in the love Hailey brought into the world during her time with us."

Preface

Hailey was a bright, joyful child who brought happiness to everyone around her. She had a kind heart, a beautiful spirit, and a way of making people feel loved and seen. Like so many children today, Hailey lived in a world where technology and social media are a normal part of growing up. But that same online world can also expose children to dangers that many families do not fully understand until it is too late.

On January 5, 2026, 17-year-old Hailey Buzbee went missing from Fishers, Indiana. She was immediately classified as a “runaway,” even though her parents knew from the very beginning that she was in serious danger. Because there was no confirmed physical abduction, an AMBER Alert was not issued. And since she did not have a qualifying disability, a Silver Alert did not apply. But Hailey did not simply “run away.” She was lured.

In today’s digital world, a predator does not need a van or a face-to-face encounter to harm a child. They only need a smartphone. Indiana’s current alert system leaves a dangerous gap when a child goes missing under suspicious, unusual, or high-risk circumstances which do not meet the existing criteria for an AMBER or Silver Alert. That gap causes delay in public awareness during the most critical early hours of a disappearance.

Hailey’s parents experienced firsthand the failures within the current system and felt the urgent need to better protect children in today’s world. This proposal is a step toward closing those gaps and builds upon the progress made during the 2026 Indiana legislative session. The Buzbee family is deeply grateful to Indiana lawmakers for continuing to prioritize the safety of our children and asks that meaningful action to protect our children be prioritized during the 2027 legislative session.

A study published in [JAMA Network Open](#) found that approximately 1 in 6 young people experience online sexual abuse before age 18, and 5.4% are groomed online by adults, with the highest risk between ages 13 and 17 (Finkelhor_etal.,2022).

One of the best tools we have to prevent internet crimes against children is education (Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, <https://www.icactaskforce.org>).

During the development of this proposal, multiple Indiana educators and school social workers were consulted to determine whether grooming education is explicitly required under current law - no clear statutory reference could be identified. The absence of an explicit requirement reveals a significant gap in child protection policy and warrants immediate attention (B. Buzbee, personal communications, February–March,2026).

Hailey's Law

Hailey's Law is a comprehensive legislative proposal to protect our children. It includes:

1. The Pink Alert Program
 - A. Pink Alert
 - B. Structural Modernization
2. Modern Predator & Grooming Education for Students
3. Additional Child Protections for Consideration

1. The Pink Alert Program: A Modernized Missing Persons Response Framework

A. Pink Alert System

The Pink Alert is a risk-based missing persons alert and coordinated digital response framework designed to modernize how Indiana responds to endangered missing persons. It would not replace AMBER or Silver Alerts, but instead serve to fill a structural gap by activating when credible indicators of danger are present and do not meet the narrow criteria of existing alert categories.

A Pink Alert would apply to missing persons of *any* age when circumstances indicate a substantial risk of harm. The Pink Alert is designed as an adaptive modern framework that empowers Indiana law enforcement to regularly update credible risk indicators, response timelines, and best practices based on real-world cases, ensuring Indiana's child protections evolve with today's risks, not outdated assumptions, and without the need for additional legislation.

Core Principle

The focus of the Pink Alert is whether credible indicators of harm exist and not age, disability status, or labels such as "runaway". When risk is present, the response from law enforcement must reflect that risk.

Risk-Based Activation Standards

A Pink Alert would activate when credible risk indicators exist such as:

- evidence of online grooming or coercive digital communication
- contact with unknown predators regardless of their age
- suspicious travel arrangements
- indicators of trafficking or exploitation
- credible threats of harm
- circumstances involving isolation, secrecy, or financial control

- vulnerability due to age or other risk factors
- a sudden, unexplained disappearance without contact or verified whereabouts

Arizona and several other states have already modernized their missing person alert frameworks with risk-based systems that allow faster action in suspicious or high-risk disappearances that fall outside traditional AMBER Alert requirements.

The Indiana State Police (or another designated statewide law enforcement agency) would be responsible for **conducting an annual review of missing children**. Additionally, they shall **publish credible risk indicators** to all Indiana law enforcement agencies to ensure alert activation and investigative decisions reflect current threats addressing evolving predator tactics. The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program is critical to being a partner in this annual review.

The Pink Alert shall also include **clearly defined response time standards** established and maintained by the Indiana State Police (or other designated statewide law enforcement agency). Such standards shall govern risk assessment, alert activation determinations and public notification timelines and may be updated as necessary to reflect operational needs and evolving threats.

The system shall also include **best practices developed** and maintained by the Indiana State Police (or another designated statewide law enforcement agency) to increase the likelihood of favorable outcomes. Best practices may include immediate digital evidence preservation requests; interagency coordination protocols; geo-targeted alert deployment procedures; supervisory activation checklists; and victim-family communication standards to ensure consistent and rapid response statewide.

The designated agency shall **submit an annual report** summarizing Pink Alert activation data, response timelines, outcomes, identified gaps, and recommendations for system improvements. The report shall be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly and made publicly available online.

Additionally, those doing this work have clearly identified the need for a **statewide law enforcement partner who is readily available in real time to support local departments** in rapidly assessing risk, recognizing dangerous indicators, and making informed decisions when a child goes missing.

Clarification Regarding “Runaway” Classifications

The Pink Alert would not eliminate the possibility that some individuals may voluntarily leave a residence. However, a “runaway” classification alone should not end a risk assessment. An alert shall not be activated if a parent or legal guardian has verified knowledge of the missing individual’s

location, the individual is confirmed to be safe, and there is no evidence of coercion, threat, or exploitation. The presumption should shift toward protective action rather than categorical dismissal in cases where:

- the individual's location is unknown,
- contact has ceased unexpectedly, or
- risk indicators are present.

All reasonable investigative steps should be taken before concluding that a disappearance presents no credible risk.

Statewide Guidance Defining “Inherently Dangerous Circumstance”

During the 2026 legislative session, progress was made to the alert system. [HB 1303](#) amends [IC 5-2-17-1](#) to include a “high risk missing person” within the definition of a “missing child” and clarifies that Indiana’s Silver Alert program applies to missing children under those circumstances.

To ensure this change functions as intended, an appropriate Indiana law enforcement entity should be responsible for **publishing clear guidance to include examples of circumstances that qualify as “inherently dangerous”** under [IC 5-2-17-1\(3\)](#). While Indiana law already includes disappearances occurring under inherently dangerous circumstances within the definition of a high-risk missing person, the absence of practical guidance creates inconsistency in how that standard is interpreted and applied.

Establishing clear, statewide guidance will support law enforcement in making timely and consistent determinations, reduce uncertainty in high-pressure situations, and help ensure that high-risk cases receive the urgent public awareness they require.

To achieve this, the **law should be improved by requiring the development and publication of clear, statewide guidance providing annually updated “inherently dangerous” circumstances**. At the same time, that guidance should be designed to remain flexible, allowing responsible law enforcement entities to update and refine criteria as new threats emerge. This approach ensures the alert system can evolve alongside the changing ways children are placed at risk, without requiring repeated legislative action, while strengthening the effectiveness of the existing statutory framework.

B. Structural Modernization

In missing persons cases, early hours are critical. Time saved through structured digital coordination directly increases investigative capacity.

Modernized Missing Persons Clearinghouse

A central component of the Pink Alert Program is the modernization of the Indiana State Police Missing Persons Clearinghouse.

At present, the Clearinghouse does not maintain dedicated social media platforms. The Pink Alert would **require the establishment of official, verified Indiana State Police social media accounts** for the Clearinghouse to ensure consistent, centralized, and authoritative public communication. This reduces misinformation, prevents fragmentation of information across private accounts, and ensures the public receives updates directly from a trusted source.

This modernization would include:

- Official Clearinghouse Social Media Presence
- Verified, ISP-managed accounts
- Verified, ICAC-managed accounts
- Standardized alert graphics and updates
- Consistent case messaging
- Centralized distribution of active Pink Alerts

Dedicated Pink Alert Web Portal

Pink Alert would **require a structured online portal** serving as a centralized public case hub. This portal would include:

- Active Pink Alert listings
- Photographs and identifying information
- Last known location mapping
- Timeline updates
- Status changes
- Official law enforcement communications

This creates a single, authoritative source for case information, reducing confusion and duplication.

Geo-Targeted Notifications

Pink Alerts would be capable of geo-targeted distribution, reducing alert fatigue while increasing precision and relevance. This means:

- Alerts can be sent to individuals within a defined geographic radius.
- Notifications only focus on the area most relevant to the investigation.
- Targeted escalation can occur if the threat expands.

Restricted Regional Tip and Evidence Submission Portal

A critical component of the Pink Alert Program would be a **secure digital evidence submission portal**. Importantly, this portal would not be open statewide or to the general public at all times. Access to the submission interface would be limited to individuals within the designated geographic alert area. All submissions would route directly to law enforcement intake systems rather than through social media comments, personal messages, or 911 dispatch lines.

When a Pink Alert is activated:

- individuals located within the alert region may access a secure upload portal.
- the public may submit Ring or security footage, dashcam video, photographs, screenshots, and digital communications.
- location-based tips can be submitted directly to investigators.

By limiting portal access to those within the defined alert zone, the system:

- reduces irrelevant or speculative submissions.
- prevents evidence overload from non-local users.
- focuses investigative intake on geographically relevant information.
- preserves system integrity and investigative efficiency.

State-Wide Voluntary Camera Registry Program (“PinkCam”)

As part of the Pink Alert, a **voluntary camera registry program is established** to assist law enforcement in rapidly identifying potential sources of relevant footage within a defined geographic area.

The registry would allow residents and businesses to voluntarily register the existence of privately owned security cameras with local law enforcement. This program would not provide law enforcement with live access, remote access, or automatic access to camera feeds. The program simply allows investigators to know where cameras exist and whom to contact.

Key Provisions

- Participation is entirely voluntary
- The registry would only include location and contact information. No live feed access or remote system access is permitted
- Law enforcement must request footage from owners
- Camera owners retain full discretion to decline or share their footage

Currently, without a centralized and structured digital system, investigators often must:

- Conduct extensive door-to-door canvassing for surveillance footage
- Manually collect doorbell camera recordings
- Sort through unverified social media posts
- Manage duplicate or non-relevant 911 calls
- Process tips received through scattered channels

The Pink Alert centralizes and organizes this process. By consolidating public submissions into a geo-restricted, structured portal and distributing information through official Clearinghouse channels, the system:

- reduces administrative burden,
- minimizes redundant field work,
- decreases dispatch overload,
- streamlines evidence intake, and
- allows officers to prioritize analysis and strategic investigation.

It transforms missing persons response from a fragmented broadcast model into a coordinated, technology-supported system aligned with modern threats and current investigative realities.

2. Education: Modern Predator & Grooming Education for Students

We respectfully urge Indiana lawmakers to require modern predator awareness education in all Indiana schools.

Indiana has an opportunity to lead the nation by ensuring that every child receives modern and relevant safety education that reflects the world they actually live in today and not the world of decades past or even a few years ago.

For decades, we have taught children about “stranger danger” and warned them not to accept candy from someone in a van. While those lessons remain important, they no longer reflect the most common threats facing our children. Today’s predators rarely appear as strangers. Instead, they pose as friends, peers, or trusted mentors and often reach children through social media, gaming platforms, messaging apps, and online communities. Importantly, these cases frequently occur without a parent’s awareness. In many instances, having proactive and responsible parenting isn’t enough. This demonstrates that existing safeguards are not sufficient to address modern threats. The evolution of stranger danger programs must happen swiftly to reflect this new reality.

The predators coming after our children use sophisticated tactics, including emotional manipulation, false identities, isolation, desensitization, and coercion. Many children and parents are simply not equipped to recognize these warning signs until it is too late.

We teach kids fire prevention, but we also teach them “STOP, DROP and ROLL” - not because we expect every child to experience a fire, but because preparation saves lives. The same proactive approach must be applied to online safety. Providing children with age-appropriate, modern predator awareness education will empower them to:

- recognize grooming behaviors, manipulation tactics and boundary-testing. understand how predators build trust and exploit vulnerabilities over time.
- identify warning signs across apps, chats, games, DMs and other online interactions.
- know how to respond, save evidence, free online support, and how to tell a trusted adult.
- protect themselves and support their peers who may be targeted.

At the same time, parents should be notified in advance and retain the ability to opt their child out of this instruction if they choose. Providing parental choice respects family values and reinforces transparency, while still making this critical education available to the vast majority of students.

The words “online predator” and “grooming” are not included in the Indiana Education Code

Online Predator and Grooming education must be explicitly stated in the Indiana Code. Failure to do so results in inconsistent education, awareness, and enforcement across schools and communities.

[IC 20-30-5-5.7](#) Instruction on child abuse and child sexual abuse does not address predators or grooming. Grooming and predator education must be explicitly stated and required in the law to ensure students, parents, and educators are equipped to recognize and respond to these behaviors before they escalate into abuse.

[SB355](#) Child abuse education and policies does not address predators and grooming behaviors although grooming is often a precursor to sexual abuse. Telling parents that grooming education is already required in schools is misleading and creates a false sense of security, leaving children vulnerable to one of the earliest and most preventable stages of abuse.

[IC 20-19-3](#) currently includes provisions addressing cyberbullying and human trafficking; however, it does not explicitly address grooming. The current grooming law does not define grooming. Therefore, we are only focusing on the outcomes of cyberbullying and trafficking, but not the pathway that leads children there. Grooming is the earliest point of intervention, and without addressing it, we are reacting too late.

Given the growing prevalence of this threat and its direct connection to both exploitation and trafficking, **grooming must be clearly defined and included within the statute** to ensure students receive relevant and preventative education. Therefore, [SB119](#) must be amended to fully define grooming in the Indiana code.

[IC 20-30-5](#) should also be updated to include **requirements for Child Online Safety education**. As children increasingly engage in digital environments, it is essential that schools provide age-appropriate instruction on recognizing online risks, understanding predatory behaviors, and practicing safe digital communication.

Without formal inclusion in statute, education on online safety remains inconsistent across schools, leaving gaps in awareness and prevention. Children are often navigating complex digital spaces without the knowledge or tools to recognize manipulation, coercion, or grooming behaviors. By incorporating Child Online Safety into IC 20-30-5, Indiana can establish a consistent, statewide standard that equips students with practical skills to protect themselves, encourages open communication with trusted adults, and shifts the focus from reaction to prevention. In a world where access to children is no longer limited by physical proximity, education is one of the most effective safeguards we can provide.

3. Other Protective Measures for our Children

Grooming

Indiana has an opportunity to take meaningful action to better protect children from modern threats that often begin long before physical harm occurs. Grooming, coercion, and online manipulation are frequently the first steps predators take, and our laws must clearly reflect the seriousness of these behaviors.

- **Raise the penalties for grooming to a *first offense felony*.**
- **Extend Legal Protections to Include all minors under 18** recognizing that older teens remain highly vulnerable to online exploitation.

- **Incorporate “Romeo and Juliet” safeguards.** While strengthening protections, include narrowly tailored exceptions to prevent criminalizing consensual, age-appropriate relationships between peers close in age. This ensures laws target predatory behavior and not typical adolescent relationships.

Social Responsibility: Interactive Digital Platform Transparency

Companies that fail to respond to lawful warrants or that do not prioritize urgent requests tied to the safety of endangered children are failing in their most basic responsibility to protect human life. When time is critical, delays or inaction can have devastating consequences. There is no justification for placing anything above a child’s safety.

Businesses that choose not to act with urgency in these moments should not be trusted in our homes or welcomed in our communities. Accountability matters and companies must be held to a standard that puts the protection of children first every time.

As a condition of operating or providing digital interactive services (e.g. social media, gaming platforms, messaging apps, and online communities) to users within Indiana, a company (to include outside U.S.) must:

- 1. Maintain the capability to receive and respond to lawful requests from law enforcement agencies; and**
- 2. Designate a United States–based legal contact available on a twenty-four (24) hour, seven (7) day per week basis to receive such requests.**

Parents deserve transparency when making decisions regarding their child’s safety. They have a right to know the average time it takes an online interactive company to respond to requests from parents and law enforcement and if those requests are acted upon at all. Without this information, families are left in the dark about the level of risk their child faces when using a platform. Clear and accessible response time metrics would empower parents to make informed decisions and better protect their children. It should also be of note that cell phone companies are not mandated to provide data, such as the content of deleted text messages, to law enforcement, even when the account holder requests it.

The Buzbee family experienced this gap firsthand. They were alarmed to learn how long it can take for companies to respond to critical requests and how easily a child’s usage history can become inaccessible or untraceable to parents. No family should have to discover these risks in the middle of a crisis.

Therefore, **mandate online platforms prominently display a standardized performance metric at the point of parental consent**, clearly showing the platform’s average response and resolution times for reports involving minors. This must include:

- average time to acknowledge a report
- average time to take protective action
- average time to complete an investigation
- separate metrics for parent/guardian reports and law enforcement requests

These metrics must be:

- updated regularly (e.g., quarterly)
- presented in a clear, easy-to-understand format
- auditable and subject to state oversight

This information shall be positioned on the same page as the parental controls interface and shall require acknowledgment by the parent or guardian before approving minor accounts. When an application introduces new or modified features that expand communication, interaction, or data-sharing capabilities, an account identified as belonging to a minor shall be temporarily restricted and require renewed parental or guardian approval. The minor shall not have access to such features until approval is granted. Companies that are not responsible risk the potential loss of trust, users, and revenue could push companies to take these responsibilities far more seriously.

Summary

Hailey’s Law provides a comprehensive, forward-looking approach to close these gaps through three key pillars:

- 1. modernizing missing persons response with the Pink Alert Program**
- 2. equipping children with modern predator and grooming education, and**
- 3. holding groomers and digital platforms accountable**

Together, these measures shift our focus from reaction to prevention and ensure that protections evolve alongside the threats our children face today.

The safety of our children cannot wait. Every day without stronger protections leaves kids vulnerable to exploitation, grooming, and preventable harm. The gaps in our current system are real and families are paying the price. The urgency to act has never been greater.

Indiana has the opportunity to lead. By taking action, we can become a state known across the country for protecting our children. In doing so, we not only better protect Hoosier families, but also position Indiana as the best place where families choose to live, grow, and invest.