



STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KAMALA D. HARRIS  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

March 19, 2012

**JOINT STATEMENT OF  
KEY PRINCIPLES OF ONLINE DATING SITE SAFETY**

Online dating is a widely used and rapidly growing form of social networking among adults. Like other online social networking communities, educating adults about using online dating websites safely is important to dating websites and law enforcement. California Attorney General Kamala D. Harris and online dating service providers eHarmony, Match.com, and Spark Networks agree to the following principles that such providers now follow and encouraging all online dating service providers to endorse these business principles to help protect their members, and help the members protect themselves, against identity theft, financial scams, and sexual predators. Providing members with a safe online dating experience should be a primary objective for operators of online dating sites. Protecting the safety of Californians is the primary mandate of the Attorney General and California's law enforcement community. This Joint Statement is not intended, and should not be construed, to confer any private rights of action or enforcement against service providers.

**I. EDUCATION AND TOOLS FOR ONLINE DATING MEMBERS**

**PRINCIPLE: *Education.*** It is important that site members are well informed about how to protect themselves from predatory conduct. Acts of violence and most financial scams take place in the physical world and do not occur through the use of the providers' online services. Educating the members of the online dating community about safe and responsible social networking site use is a necessary, and the most important, part of a safe Internet experience. Information that empowers members and raises their awareness of safety issues is an essential component of a safer online experience.

- The providers will provide online safety tips, safety tips for meeting people offline, and fraud prevention guidance ("Safety Tips") on their websites along with periodic reminders to members of that guidance and the need to review safety precautions.
- The providers may elect to provide the Safety Tips in a variety of manners designed to notify members, including the following:

- Links to the Safety Tips may be displayed on the website's home page, on pages containing member communications, or in the footer on certain pages within the website; and
- Financial scam warnings may be referenced periodically in confirmation emails from providers that are sent to members who pay for fee-based services.
- The providers will continue to explore other resources and venues to convey important information to help members protect themselves.

## II. ONLINE SAFETY TOOLS

**PRINCIPLE: *Financial Security and Physical Safety.*** The providers are committed to working vigorously to protect their users from financial scammers and sexual predators. The providers will deal with member complaints with appropriate diligence and will ensure that violations of provisions of the providers' Terms of Use or User Agreements that relate to financial security and physical safety will be diligently enforced. Additionally, sex offender screening can be one aspect of promoting member safety.

- To maximize effective response to consumer concerns, the providers will employ a rapid abuse reporting system. Through this system, members of the providers' websites will have access to a website, email address and/or phone number to notify the provider of potential physical safety issues, fraud, or other suspected criminal activity. The providers will acknowledge receipt of the consumer concerns or complaints.
- The providers will also review profiles of members in an effort to identify fake profiles that may be used to perpetuate financial scams. These reviews may involve manual and/or automatic reviews.
- While sex offender screening can be a useful safety tool, such screening tools have many limitations which impact their efficacy. However, the providers will use tools and technologies to identify sexual predators, including checking sex offender registries when the providers possess the requisite information to conduct such checks, and, when identified, remove registered sexual predators from participating in fee-based services on their websites.
- The providers will remind members that the members are responsible for their own safety and offline activities. As noted, because there are limitations to the effectiveness of sex offender screening tools and use of such tools does not guarantee member safety, providers will not promote or publicize sex offender screening tools in a manner intended to lead members to assume that due to the providers' use of sex offender screening tools, meeting people online is any safer than meeting people any other way. The providers will disclose in the Terms of Use or User Agreements for their websites that members should not rely on sex offender screenings or other protective tools as a guarantee for safety or a replacement for following Safety Tips.

- As noted above, using Safety Tips, the providers will advise members that they must remain vigilant as to their own safety, utilize all self-checking methods at their disposal, and practice appropriate safety precautions.

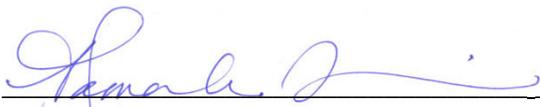
**PRINCIPLE: *Identity Protection.*** The providers are committed to developing and utilizing online safety tools to deter, detect, and defend against identity theft and financial scams. The providers and the Attorney General will meet on a regular basis to discuss best practices for protecting against identity theft and functionality improvements in online safety tools.

### III. COOPERATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

**PRINCIPLE: *Law Enforcement Cooperation.*** Online dating site operators and law enforcement officials must work together to deter and prosecute criminals who misuse the providers' sites.

- The Attorney General will assign a liaison from the eCrime Unit to address any concerns about potential criminal conduct that providers may have. The Attorney General and providers will work together to support initiatives that will enhance the ability of law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute crimes stemming from abuse of the providers' sites in California.
- The Attorney General and providers will continue to work together to ensure that law enforcement officials can quickly investigate and prosecute criminal conduct in California involving the providers' websites.

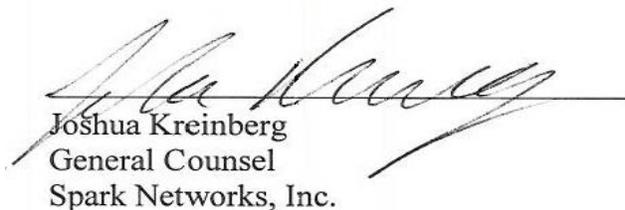
Agreed to and accepted on March 19, 2012



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