

NY: Networking site Tagged.com ignored abuse rules

10 June 2010, By SAMANTHA GROSS , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Child pornography was allowed to remain on social-networking site Tagged.com for nearly two months after undercover investigators posed as users and reported the content to the site's administrators, the state attorney general's office charged Thursday.

The office notified Tagged.com that it would sue the site if the problems were not resolved within 5 days, said Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, who previously targeted the site last summer and accused it of stealing the identities of more than 60 million [Internet users](#) in a deceptive [marketing campaign](#).

One slideshow that remained on the site as of Thursday morning depicted children, some who appeared as young as 5, engaged in sexual acts with other children, Cuomo's office said. The slideshow was sent to Tagged.com on April 17 using the site's own reporting procedures.

Louis Willacy, a lawyer for Tagged Inc., issued a statement saying the site was cooperating with investigators and hoped "to resolve this quickly in the best interest of our members' safety."

"We strive constantly to improve our program to keep illegal content out and prevent unlawful contact between adults and minors on our site," he said. A spokeswoman declined to comment further.

Cuomo, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor, told reporters at a press conference that he was speaking as a father of three school-age daughters when he issued a warning to parents: "Sometimes the most dangerous place for a young person can be sitting on their bed, in their bedroom, at home with their computer open - because you really don't know where they are," he said.

After receiving a civilian tip, investigators from Cuomo's office spent three months creating

undercover user accounts and posing as both parents and abusers. They made more than 100 reports about 80 users, but as of Thursday morning, 51 of those users still had active accounts, the office said. Hours after the press conference, the slideshow featuring young children was still online, the office said.

Investigators also said they found that adult users of the site were sending inappropriate sexual messages and photographs to members identifying themselves as underage. Some of the site's user groups centered on underage sex, Cuomo's office said.

Information on possible convicted sex offenders registered on the site was passed on to local law enforcement agencies, the office said.

Tagged, based in California, was started in 2004 by Harvard math students Greg Tseng and Johann Schleier-Smith. The website calls itself "one of the largest social networks in the world" and claims to be one of the top 10 online display-ad publishers in the U.S.

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