

Case Studies: E-Wallets

The Polaris FIU reviewed cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline which included information regarding e-wallets. This document includes selected cases that contain significant details and illustrate how digital wallets are involved in trafficking situations.

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Polaris received \$3.5 million through competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant # 90ZV0138-01- 00. The project will be financed with 77.7% of federal funds and 22.3% (\$1.002 million) by non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

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Case 1:

An adult female reported to the hotline that her former partner and his friend filmed videos of her and put the videos online for viewers to purchase. The videos show the caller having sex with her former partner and contained other sexual or nude content. The caller reported that these videos were posted to Facebook and that viewers could watch them if they paid the caller's former partner and his friend through Google Pay.

Case 2:

A hotline caller reported that her intimate partner forced her to engage in commercial sex for drugs after posting the caller's information in commercial sex advertisements online. Her partner also opened multiple Apple Pay and Google Pay accounts in the caller's name to illegally collect benefits using her personal information.

Case 3:

A caller contacted the hotline about a potential trafficking situation involving his ex-girlfriend. The caller reported that his ex now moves around multiple hotels with an adult male. The caller alleged that the man forces his ex to live in the hotels, will not allow her to leave the room, and is physically abusive. The caller became more concerned when he received a text message he believes was meant for a commercial sex buyer. The message had pictures of his ex and prices for sexual acts, along with a Google Pay account where payment could be sent.

Case 4:

A hotline caller reported she learned that an adult male she knows was trying to sex traffick minors at various high schools after reading his emails and text messages. The caller alleged that this man used the caller's information to make false accounts on the adult dating website Secretbenefits.com. The man's email was connected to a proxy server that would send mass emails to various high schools. The man also opened a bank account through Google Pay that is connected to his Visa card.

Continued Case Studies: E-Wallets

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Case 5:

An adult female contacted the hotline to report her sex trafficking situation. The caller stated that she was trafficked by an adult male who would film and sell sexual images or videos online, including sexual abuse material that included minors. The caller stated she found the content of herself and minors on Pornhub, Google Music, Apple iTunes, TikTok, and Rodlex.

Case 6:

A caller contacted the hotline to report that a potential victim of sex trafficking mentioned to her that individuals providing commercial sexual services promote these services on dating websites and later request payment for commercial sex acts via Apple Pay or Bitcoin, usually for \$350.

Case 7:

Inspectors contacted the hotline about a potential illicit massage business. The callers stated that the business is listed in RubMaps, a website listing illicit massage businesses. The callers spoke to an individual who works at the business who says she has not been paid after working there for over a month. The callers noted that when they ran transaction history for the business they found that clients were charged for hundreds of dollars more than the services they received. This was usually around \$300. Most transactions were paid through credit cards or Apple Pay.

Case 8:

A caller contacted the hotline about a family member who was live streaming explicit videos of his daughters. The caller reported that this individual has also livestreamed her having sex without her consent. Live streams are shown on Facebook, Twitter and other websites. The caller found out about this after finding a computer linked to her Apple account, and saw information about electronic payments. Caller is not sure how these payments are being made but assumes it is via Apple Pay. The caller believes the computer belongs to the family member and the payments are made by viewers of the sexually explicit live streams.

Case 9:

A caller contacted the hotline regarding a minor female in a sex trafficking situation. The minor works as a dancer at a strip club. An individual picks up the minor and takes her to work, and drives her home. The minor is living with an older man who has his debit card linked to her Apple Pay so she can purchase things.

Case 10:

A hotline caller reported that an adult male befriended her online. The caller stated that this man is involved in producing child sexual abuse material and actively seeks out children to connect with online through KIK and Minecraft. The caller added that the man utilizes the dark web to find child sexual abuse material and uses PayPal and Paxum to pay for the exploitative material of minors.