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AOL Monitor Accused of Luring 15-Year-Old

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An Internet chat room monitor hired to keep children safe from sexual predators seduced a California girl online and was about to meet her for sex when he was found out by a co-worker, a lawsuit charges.

According to documents filed April 1 in Los Angeles Superior Court, the online relationship began when the girl was 15. She met the AOL employee in a children's chat room and confided in him about her parents' divorce and her troubles making friends.

Their conversations online and by phone became increasingly explicit, the lawsuit says. They were preparing to meet on the girl's 17th birthday when one of the monitor's co-workers became suspicious and prevented the encounter.

The lawsuit charges AOL and its parent company, Time Warner Inc., with failing to supervise the employee and of falsely advertising that its online service was safe for children. It also charges the monitor with inflicting emotional distress.

America Online spokesman Nicholas Graham said the company fired the monitor and contacted authorities after learning of the situation in April 2003. The man, who was 23 when he met the girl online, has not been charged with a crime.

Graham said AOL puts its chat room monitors through "rigorous screening and training procedures," including a criminal background check.

The teenager, who is now 19 and living in Los Angeles, waited two years to bring legal action because it was "a very confusing and painful time for her," her lawyer Olivier Taillieu told the Los Angeles Times.

The suit seeks compensatory and punitive damages of more than $25,000 but does not give a specific dollar amount. Taillieu did not immediately respond to a call seeking comment Saturday.

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Security

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