

COVID-19, WHOIS, and the Pressing Need for Help With Domain Name System Abuse

As widely reported, and not surprising, the internet is swimming in COVID-19 online scams. Criminals, accustomed to rapidly grabbing online territory during times of crisis and profiting from public fear, are working overtime in the face of the coronavirus. Unfortunately, ICANN's failure to enforce its minimal WHOIS and DNS abuse requirements has resulted in delayed mitigation efforts at a time when swift responses are needed to protect the public from COVID-19 scams.

For years, ICANN Org has been challenged to proactively address DNS abuse—with calls to action intensifying over the course of the past two ICANN meetings. The problem, already acute, is now even more visible due to the pandemic and is exacerbating this tragic public health crisis. ICANN Org has the tools, via enforcement of its contracts with registrars and registries, to do something about this—but it's not. The COVID crisis calls for an immediate response from the ICANN Board to ensure that ICANN's contracts are enforced, timely WHOIS access is granted, and ICANN's operations actively support DNS abuse mitigation efforts, to the greatest extent possible.

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