

SEXTING



What Every Teen Needs to Know

Message from Attorney General Beau Biden

You have amazing technology in your hands...your cell phone. Your cell phone allows you to stay connected to friends and family, search the web, send and receive texts and pictures anytime from anywhere. Cell phone and computer technology improves every day, but as it offers greater capabilities it also comes with greater responsibilities.

Messages that start out as a joke or something that you don't even think about- a funny wall post, a picture, or a flirty comment can end up causing a lifetime of harm. Pictures and texts you send can be forwarded to others without your knowledge. Remember, once you press send, you lose control.

Sexting is sending or forwarding nude, sexually suggestive, or explicit pictures on your cell phone or online. If you send a sexually explicit image there are all types of consequences: legal consequences- you may be arrested and/or required to register as a sex offender; as well as non-legal consequences: You could face embarrassment, humiliation, or a ruined reputation. If you receive a sexually explicit image, you don't always know the circumstances behind the photo- was the person in the picture pressured into posing or did they even know the picture was being taken? Forwarding the picture to others continues the images' rapid spread and increases the potential hurt, humiliation, and depression experienced by the person in the image.

Do your part and stop the spread of these messages. Don't take explicit pictures of yourself or your friends. Don't send or forward sexually explicit photos if you receive them, and don't respond to these messages. Respect yourself and your friends. Resist the pressure to engage in this behavior.

Think before you send or respond to these messages on your cell phone or online. Remember: Send is 4ever.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph R. Biden, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

What is Sexting?

Sexting is sending or forwarding nude, sexually suggestive, or explicit pictures on your cell phone or online. Once these images are sent, they spread rapidly and are available for anyone and everyone to view.



Once you press “send,” you are no longer in control of the distribution of the image; it is out there 4ever and the potential audience is limitless. First, it is sent to your boyfriend or girlfriend, then to your circle of friends, then to your entire school, and continues on.....**Remember: Send is 4ever!**

Did you know?

- 1 in 5 sext recipients have passed/forwarded the sext to someone else.
- 50% of teenagers have shared the sext with multiple people.
(A Thin Line, 2009)

Sexting is a problem when.....

The person posing is under the age of 18 years old.

- Understand that taken nude or explicit photos or sending nude/explicit pictures of someone under the age of 18 years old is considered child pornography. This may result in criminal charges, including placement on the sex offender registry.

Peer Pressure is involved.

- You may feel pressured by a boyfriend, girlfriend, or friends to take a suggestive photo. This may cause you to feel nervous and uncomfortable. Trust your instinct. Remember- you have full control over how much you expose to the camera. Do you want to be cool for two minutes or end up humiliated for a long time? Keep your clothes on and smile for the camera.

Coercion occurs.

- If a boyfriend, girlfriend, or someone you meet online tries to force you to take a suggestive picture by making threats, tell a trusted adult **IMMEDIATELY**. This is a form of **cyberbullying** that has serious, legal consequences. Remember that you have full control over what you show to the camera and no one can force you to pose for explicit pictures!

The picture goes VIRAL.

- When a picture goes VIRAL, it is online 4ever for anyone and everyone to view. Once a picture is sent, you have no control over the pictures destination. It may end up on the internet or on the cell phones of individuals that you never intended to send it to.

Circumstances of the picture taken are unknown.

- When you receive a nude or explicit picture, remember that you do not know what happened when the picture was taken! Maybe the individual was pressured, coerced, drunk, or was unaware that the pic was being taken or filmed. You can be sure that the person does not want the images widely distributed.

(Source: A Thin Line, 2009)

Consequences of Sexting

It's ILLEGAL

Taking or sending a sexually suggestive photo of yourself or anyone else can result in criminal charges!

You may be charged with producing, distributing, or possessing child pornography.

- Producing Child Pornography if you are in the image
- Distributing Child Pornography if you forward the image
- Possession of Child Pornography if you have the image on your cell phone or computer

If you distribute sexually suggestive photos of yourself or others, you may be charged with sex offenses and placed on the **sex offender registry**, which has negative and lasting consequences that may affect all areas of your life including future employment, acceptance into college or the military, and dictates where you can/cannot live.

Social and Emotional Consequences

- Feelings of shame, embarrassment, depression
- A damaged reputation
- Contributing to the emotional pain of another

Once a picture goes VIRAL, it can cause severe embarrassment, depression, and shame. It can also hurt your reputation. Just think, do you want a naked picture of yourself online when you go for your first job interview? Would you want your parents or teachers to see the pictures? Would you post it online for everyone to see?

Individuals who send sexts are 4 times more likely to have considered suicide in the past year than those who do not send sexts (A Thin Line, 2009).

Teenage stories

Cruelty Leads to Suicide

Last year, Jessica Logan, a Cincinnati, Ohio teen, hanged herself after her nude photo, meant for her boyfriend, was sent to teenagers at several high schools. For months after, her father says, she was the subject of ridicule and taunts. “Everyone knew about that photo,” Bert Logan says. “She could not live it down.” On July 3, 2008, Jessica’s mother Cynthia found her. “She had been getting dressed to go out. The curling iron was still warm. It was so unexpected.” Logan says. “I heard my wife scream, I ran up to Jessie’s room, but it was too late.” A lawsuit has been filed against all of the people who were known to have forwarded the picture (Feyerick & Steffen, 2008).

Registered Sex Offender

3 in 10 young people have been involved in sexting (A Thin Line, 2009)

Phillip Albert, now 20, has faced other consequences. When he was 17, his 16 year old girlfriend sent him naked pictures. A month after he turned 18, he and his girlfriend got into a fight and after a nasty phone message from her in the middle of the night, he sent her picture to everyone in his contacts. Her picture was sent to over 70 people including family and friends. Phillip was charged with distribution of child pornography and placed on the sex offender registry. He was kicked out of college, can’t find a job, and can’t live with his father because the house is too close to a high school. As a sex offender, Phillip cannot live near a school, playground, or a church. He may be on the sex offender registry until he is 40 years old (Feyerick & Steffen, 2008).

What to do if you receive a Sext?

REPORT IT.

Reporting the image may protect you from criminal charges and protects the person in the image from further embarrassment and emotional distress. Reporting the image is not snitching. You're doing the right thing by stopping the cruelty involved in ruining someone's reputation...you may even be saving a life and your future!

How to Report Sexting:

Go online to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) @ www.ncmec.org and report to the **CyberTipline** or call the **Hotline** at 1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST)

OR

Tell a trusted teacher, parent, or adult who can report it

OR

Call your local or state police

If you are sent or view an explicit photo on Facebook or another social networking site, make sure to report the image

Resources for Families

- Delaware Attorney General's Office
Website: www.attorneygeneral.delaware.gov
Wilmington Office (302) 577-8500
Dover Office (302) 739-4211
Georgetown Office (302) 856-5353
- Local and State Police
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
www.ncmec.org or 1 (800) 843-5678
- Delaware Child Predator Task Force
(302) 739-2030
- The Delaware Department of Services for Children,
Youth, and Their Families
www.kids.delaware.gov (302) 633-2600

Websites

www.safekids.org

www.safeteens.com

www.netsmartz.org

www.ikeepSAFE.org

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