

Sexting Posters & Instructional Materials

Center for Safe and Responsible Internet
<http://csriu.org>

The issue of teen sexting has exploded into a massive concern since the early 2010. I track the Google News Alerts for sexting news stories and the number of stories has been increasing exponentially. While most of the attention has been on concerns related to teen sexting, an article on the AARP web site notes that seniors are engaging in sexting. Two recent surveys revealed that around a third of young adults have sent or received such images. Given the cross generational nature of this activity consideration made be given to the idea that this may fall within the range of normative human sexual behavior - which if the images are not shared beyond intimate partners should be no one's business. It must be recognized that teens are maturing sexually and are interested in and engaging in sex. This being said, there are very important reasons to seek to reduce this level of activity, especially the distribution of these images. Teen personal relationships are not stable. There is a much greater likelihood that these images will be widely disseminated. And teens who are depicted are more easily exploited.

Of significant concern are the number of arrests that are being made: 12 and 13 year olds who exchanged images of private body parts with each other - but no one else - who have been charged with trafficking in child pornography and exploitation of minors. Arrest of an 18 year old who had been exchanging sexual images with his 16 year old girl friend on charges that could lead to his registration as a sex offender. A high school student arrested because he received a nude image of unknown teens or young adults and did not delete it from his cell phone rapidly enough. In an incident reported privately, some high school seniors were together at a party and created a raunchy video. One had turned 18 three weeks earlier. Nothing happened to the 17 year olds. The 18 year old is now a registered sex offender. The number of arrests are increasing - not abating.

A state Attorney General is telling the media that 1 in 5 of the teens in his state are engaging in sexting and that they could face 10 years in prison and life as a registered sex offender for this. Teens who are sexually abused frequently do not report such abuse because they fear they will get into trouble. Given the incident rates, teens are like to be providing nude images, especially if they think they have "found love" and person promises secrecy. Telling teens that they could be arrested for producing a sexual image could result in their failure to report and continued abuse. A brochure from a district attorney in another state basically says the same thing, but also tells students how another teen was so humiliated because the image she had sent went public that she committed suicide. This kind of messaging could cause teens to consider suicide a viable option.

There have already been two teen suicides that appear to be related to sexting. In both of these cases, the adults overreacted and there was extensive news coverage, this coverage likely furthered the spread of the images and legitimized peer harassment, which the school officials were unable or unwilling to stop. It is clearly imperative that this "scorched earth" approach to trying to address this concern be stopped. But there is little school officials can do to rein in overreactive law enforcement. The population that appears to be at greatest risk are the young adults - who face a life destroyed due to registration as a sex offender for engaging in behavior that crossed the artificially-established demarcation between minor and adult. Like age peers can engage in sex - but if they share images, the young adult will be considered a sex offender.

A full report on the sexting concern on the CSRIU site which sets forth the research, discussed the legal issues, and provides recommendations for statutory changes and effective investigation and intervention. An approximately 2 hour professional development presentation entitled Cyberbullying, Cyberthreats & Sexting will be available on or around February 15, 2010.

These poster and educational materials have been provided to help schools educate students about the risks. These materials may be freely reproduced and distributed by any non-profit institution.

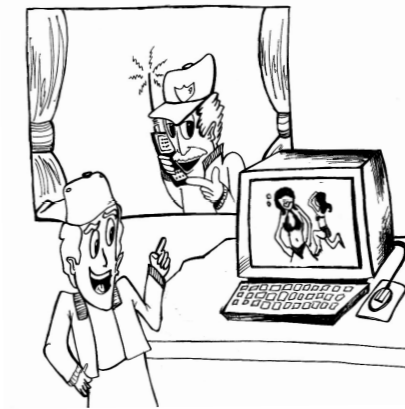
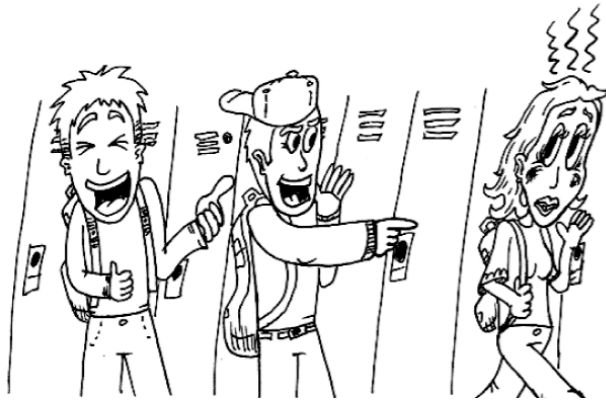
If you wouldn't post it on a bulletin board at school ...



don't post it online or
send it by text!

Sexting

Nude sexy images of teens can cause many problems.



Don't create, post, or send nude or sexy images!

Think about how you would feel if the image were posted on the bulletin board!

The second that image leaves your device, you face the risk of it becoming public. You have no control over who will see it. This could lead to harassment and interfere with what you want to do in your life.

If you are over 18 and send a nude image to ~ request a nude image from ~ or distribute a nude image of a minor, you face arrest for enticement, disseminating obscene materials to minors, or child pornography.



Don't demand or trick someone into creating and sending you such an image or use an image you receive in a harassing manner. Not only is this disrespectful and cruel, this could also get you into really bad trouble, including your arrest.

If you made a mistake and provided an image and someone is now threatening to disclose your image, tell a trusted adult. Yes, you made a mistake. But this is blackmail and it is not okay. It is very important to report this to an adult.

If you receive a nude image, don't add to the harm by sending it to others. Delete it ~ or tell a responsible adult.

Sexting

You are 18, you can ...

Vote. Get a credit card. Join the military.

If you send a nude image to ~ or request a nude image from ~ or distribute a nude image of ~ someone who is not 18, you can ...

Be arrested. Be prosecuted as a felon. Be required to register as a sex offender!

Think before you act!



If you send a nude image to anyone ...



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You have given that person the power to destroy your reputation!

If you send a nude image to anyone ...



That person could:

Send it to many others

Use it for blackmail

Traffic it as child porn

Give it to school officials or the police