

## Important Information about Sextortion and How to Stay Safe Online

We know you're plugged into your social media, gaming, and messaging apps—it's how we all stay connected these days. But we need to talk about something important to help keep you safe online: **Sextortion**.

**What is Sextortion?** Sextortion is a form of online blackmail. It happens when someone tricks, pressures, or forces you to share explicit photos or videos, and then threatens to share them with others unless you give them more images, money, or favors. Often, the person behind it is pretending to be someone else, like a peer or someone you trust.

It can happen on any platform where you interact with others, from social media apps to gaming chats. The truth is, *anyone* can be targeted—no matter who they are or where they live.

### Why Does It Matter?

Cases of sextortion are on the rise, and many victims feel trapped, scared, or even ashamed to come forward. But you should never feel like you're alone in this. There are people here at school and in the community who are ready to help, and we want you to be aware of how to protect yourself.

### Here's What You Can Do:

- **Don't Share Explicit Images:** Even if you think you trust someone, remember that once something is online, it can be saved, shared, or used against you. It's safer to keep it private.
- **Be Careful with Strangers:** People can pretend to be anyone online. If someone you don't know or don't trust is asking for personal photos or videos, **don't** send them.
- **Tell Someone:** If you've been threatened, blackmailed, or feel uncomfortable in any way, it's important to talk to a trusted adult, whether that's a parent, counselor, or teacher. We're here to help and support you.
- **Block and Report:** If you're being harassed, block the person immediately and report them to the platform you're using. We can also help you report it to law enforcement if necessary.

### Resources for You:

- **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)** – Learn more and report concerns: <https://www.missingkids.org/>
- **Take It Down** – A service to help remove explicit images online: <https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/>
- **FBI Sextortion Awareness** – Tips and facts about sextortion: <https://www.fbi.gov/sextortion>
- **Thorn's Stop Sextortion Campaign** – Guides and advice for teens: <https://www.thorn.org/sextortion/>

Remember: If something doesn't feel right or if you're unsure about a situation online, don't keep it to yourself. Speak up. The earlier you reach out, the sooner we can help protect you and others.

Respectfully,



Greg Bonamase, Superintendent, Lordstown Schools



Dave Harrison, Lordstown School Resource Officer