

# Be Alert Parents!

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## – Consequences of Sharing Sexual Content Material (8.04)

### Training Provided to Students - Consequences of Sharing Sexual Content Material (8.04)

Sexting is the sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages or images, which occurs through text message, video, social media applications, email, webcam, or other avenues via the internet. Concerns regarding sexting began to emerge in the last decade as media and research began highlighting the possible long-term consequences.

Although sexting may appear harmless when it occurs between two consenting adults, it can result in serious criminal charges when it involves minors. Texas law identifies this activity as electronically transmitting sexual depictions of children. As technology has evolved, it has also become apparent that bullying and harassment can be both a cause and effect of sexting.

It is against the law for anyone, including a minor, to send a sexually explicit or suggestive image of someone under 18 years of age. This includes images of the sender, recipient, or another minor child.

#### What Parents May Think About Sexting:

- My child knows better and would never do that.
- I check my child's phone, so I would know if they are engaging in it.
- Only promiscuous kids do that.
- I talk to my kids and they would tell me if they were sexting.
- My child does not even think about sex yet.
- My child is too young to sext.

#### What Young People May Think About Sexting:

- It is just flirting.
- What is the big deal? Everybody does it.
- He/she loves me; I know he/she will not share.
- They will think I am hot when they see this pic.
- If I do not send this, she/he will break up with me.
- If he/she did not want people to see it, he/she would not have sent it.

#### Sexting is a Safety Issue

- **Revenge Porn** Once photos and videos are shared with another person or posted online, they usually get spread around. Images and videos can be forwarded or posted as revenge; for example, for breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, for perceived rejection or offense, as blackmail, due to bullying, or to increase the status of the poster. This is labeled as "revenge porn." These images or videos can end up online, and as discussed earlier, once something is on the internet, it never truly goes away. Texas has a law addressing revenge porn and other unlawful disclosure of intimate images. The penalty for this offense is a state jail felony.
- **Sextortion** Images can be obtained in various ways: criminals hacking into cloud accounts or webcams; boyfriends or girlfriends sharing images which are then spread around; or by revenge porn. Once videos or images are obtained, they can be used to manipulate or coerce the person in the photo or the person who took the photo to obtain additional or more graphic images. This is called "sextortion" and it is one of the fastest-growing global crimes. Both young people and adults are potential targets, usually for money, but victims of sextortion have also been forced into sex or committing crimes, and it has pushed some people to (falsely) believe suicide is the only way to escape the humiliation, bullying, or extortion caused by an obtained image.

### **It's Against the Law**

It is critical that you, using age and developmentally appropriate language, speak with your child about not taking, posting, or sharing sexual images or videos of themselves or others, and about the laws that are in place.

It is against the law:

- To solicit a minor online for sexual contact or sexual communication.
- To pretend to be someone else, without their consent, with the intent to harm or threaten that person.
- For a minor to engage, promote, possess, or send another minor sexual images which depict minors.
- To send electronic visual material which shows a person engaging in sexual conduct or exposing intimate parts, which is not requested or consented to by the recipient. This applies to all online platforms, text, and email.