



SEXTORTION 101

a quick guide for parents and educators

In recent years, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has reported seeing a huge increase in the number of cases involving children and teens involved in "sextortion" (derived from "sex" and "extortion"), a form of online blackmail using nude images and videos. Teen boys have been common targets of recent cases. Sextortion is one of the fastest-growing scams affecting teenagers globally and has been linked to dozens of suicides in the US alone. Many of the scammers appear to be from Nigeria.

What is "Sextortion?"

- Sextortion is a form of child sexual exploitation where children are threatened or blackmailed, most often with the possibility of sharing with the public nude or sexual images or videos of them, by a person who demands additional sexual content, sexual activity or money from the child.
- The crime may happen when a child has shared an image with someone they thought they knew or trusted. However, in many cases, they are targeted by an individual they met online.
- Sextortion often begins through deception on social media, dating apps, or online gaming sites where predators gain the victim's trust and convince them to share explicit content.
- It is a form of sexual exploitation that causes significant emotional trauma to victims.
- Sextortion is a crime that crosses multiple jurisdictions and state/national borders via the internet.

Tactics Predators Use to Entice Victims

- Visits public social media profiles to find out more about the victim, including the victim's friend list; searches for other personal information that may harm their victim's reputation
- Uses fake accounts to send direct messages ("DM") to hundreds of teens, looking for responses
- Develops a false rapport with the victim
- May flatter, strike up a friendship or promise a romantic relationship
- Offer something of value (i.e. job promise, gaming credit in exchange for a "quick picture")
- Secretly records explicit videos and messages during chats
- Uses multiple identities to contact the child
- Pretends to be younger or a member of the opposite sex
- Hacks accounts to steal sexual images
- Threatens to commit suicide if the victim refuses to send images
- Makes first contact with a victim on one platform, then asks them to move to a second or third platform that uses encrypted messaging
- Threatens to expose the material if the victim refuses to comply with their demands
- Falsely claims that they already have explicit photos that they intend to distribute or may produce a "deepfake" image (fake images, videos, and audio created using artificial intelligence ("AI") software that manipulate existing media)
- May threaten to harm the victim, other people, or things the victim cares about
- Threatens to publish images or threatens violence to get the victim to produce more images

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Where to Get Help

The shame, fear, and confusion children feel often prevents them from asking for help or reporting the abuse. Further, they may be afraid of the repercussions threatened by the criminal, afraid access to digital devices may be taken away, or afraid they will be in trouble with their parents, guardians, or law enforcement.

If your child is a victim of sextortion:

- Report it. Contact your local FBI field office, call 1-800-CALL-FBI, or report it online at tips.fbi.gov.
- Remind yourself and your child that the blackmailer is to blame, not your child. Even if the child made a regretful choice, the blackmailer is the one committing the crime as it is illegal and wrong for an adult to ask for, pay for, or demand graphic images from a minor.
- Report the predator's account via the platform's safety feature.
- Block the suspect but **DO NOT DELETE** the profile or messages because that can be helpful in stopping the blackmailer.
- Visit "Take It Down" at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for help in getting explicit images removed from the internet.

Conversation Starters

Open lines of communication are the best defense against sextortion. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to have conversations with their children early on regarding their online activity.

Ask your child, "Has an online stranger or someone you know..."

- Tried to befriend you? If so, how do you know about this person?"
- Talked to you about sex?"
- Asked you for personal information?"
- Asked you for pictures? Sent you pictures?"
- Said anything to make you feel uncomfortable?"
- Offered to send you gifts or money?"
- Said anything to threaten you, our family or loved ones?"

safety & prevention 101
RULES N' TOOLS®

No child is immune to online threats: Parents are the "first line of defense."

- At an early age, build an atmosphere of trust around the use of digital devices. Encourage your child to come to you with any issue they are confronted with online. Be the safe adult and let them know you will listen, not overreact, and help them if they made a mistake or are afraid. Remember, a groomer will use 'shame' as a tactic to keep a child silent. As a trusted parent, you can be the "shame buster"... Nothing is off limits to discuss with mom or dad.
- Know your child's usernames and passwords for email and social media.
- Check to see if your child has any hidden apps or accounts.
- Teach your child not to share personally identifiable information (PII) including date of birth, address, full name, school or any image that can be used to identify or track your child down.
- Be alert to warning signs your child may be in contact with an online predator, especially if your child becomes secretive or obsessive about online activities, gets angry when he or she can't get online, receives/makes phone calls from people you don't know or recognize, changes screens or turns off computer when an adult enters a room, withdraws from family and friends, or receives gifts, mail, or packages from someone you don't know.
- Block strangers and use privacy settings on social networking pages. Remind your child to NEVER arrange to meet with someone that he/she has only met online, and to come to you if a request for an in-person meeting has been made.
- Assume your webcam or recording devices can be activated remotely. Never have your phone or other electronic camera devices pointed at you while undressing or in a position you would not want to share with the world.
- Implement Safety Rules and Software tools ("Rules 'N Tools®") on all internet enabled devices and platforms used by your child. See the Enough Is Enough® "Rules 'N Tools®" guide at internetsafety101.org
- Essential software tools including setting age-appropriate filters, monitoring and time management software.
- Have your child sign the **Family Contract for Smart Phones and Digital Devices**

Enough Is Enough® (EIE) Quick Guides are based on EIE's **Internet Safety 101**® Emmy Award-winning multi-media program and website designed to educate, equip and empower parents, educators and other adults with information needed to protect children from internet dangers.

For more information, visit internetsafety101.org and enough.org.